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A HATCHMENT

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BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

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TO

WALTER B. HARRIS

OF TANGIER

EXPLORER, WRITER AND FRIEND

PREFACE

THERE is a something almost indecent, as it were, in setting forth all a man thinks and feels, without an explanation or at the least a prelude of some sort. A fencing master goes through the salute, a jockey takes a preliminary canter, even divines resort to incantations of some kind or other before they fall a-preaching, and when a speaker starts with "Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen" and the farrago that goes to herald forth a speech, that is his preface.

Now, preludes, prefaces and explanations are of the nature of a stalking horse, by means of which writers may approach their readers on their blind side. If a man writes a treatise upon aviation, or astronomy, he naturally has no false shame, for no one writes upon such matters without full knowledge, and it is ten to one he knows a hundred times more of them than does the man who reads. If by mischance the writer on the subjects I have named makes

a mistake of detail, he is easily excused, and no one thinks himself aggrieved.

Upon the other hand, a man who writes from his own imagination should he chance to err in taste (a fault that even critics sometimes fall into) or fail in interesting, make but the slightest slip in grammar or in style, he is held as one accursed.

Only a poet gets worse treatment, for he, if he should happen to turn out a genius, is straightway worshipped, almost held a god; but if he fail, or if he only should attain mere excellence, all those who read him, although most likely they never wrote a line of verse in all their lives (or even decent prose), treat him as if he had insulted all their female relatives, was a stealer of the sacrament, and had sinned against the Holy Ghost. This possibly is just as it applies to poets, for when they are really great they make humanity feel small, and to a degree the same applies to every writer who comes before the public with something of his own, I mean something that no one else in the whole world could possibly have written, let it be good or bad.

In a way no writer can complain. Suppose Columbus after all the coil he made, and after all the months that he had bothered both the Catholic kings, when they, as they conceived it, were occupied before Granada, in the most important matter in the world, had sailed away upon the proceeds of Queen Isabella's jewels, and had returned again, having found nothing but a waste of water, just like eternity, with no end or beginning, what would the world have said?

There was no standard in those days by which to judge Columbus, and there is none to-day, or ever will be one (as far as I can see), by which to measure writers, except they write on history, or mathematics, or compile biographies.

This being so, writers have no ground of complaint if they are weighed by a different metric system to that by which they weigh themselves. All they can do is to write some kind of preface or another for their own satisfaction, and to explain themselves . . . to themselves, for naturally no one pays any attention to anything they write.

When a friend comes up for election at a club we do not go about saying he is a swindler and a rogue (that would be actionable and hence immoral); but very quietly, after having said we hope that Jones will be elected, drop a black bullet in the urn. The same thing happens to a writer, and his friends and critics straightway fall upon him, frequently not because of anything he writes, but from political, religious, or from social prejudice, just like a hundredweight of bricks.

Therefore, why after all should any writer take the trouble to write a preface to his work? I take it that it is, as it were, an involuntary action, just as some men, as brave as lions, never can fire a gun without first closing both their eyes.

Writers there are who are so far removed above their fellow-men, either by talent, social position, or by an aptitude for golf or politics (for these things weigh with critics just as much as style, or as originality), that they are shut off in a tower of brass, and quite invulnerable.

Let these write on, conscious that everything

they pen will be approved of; but the rout of scribblers always should have some little thing, such as a preface or the like, on which the critics may take off the keen edge of their wit, just as in times gone by in low-class schools they served the suet pudding out before the meat.

I pen this foreword, not that I hope in any way it may avert misapprehension, for that I know is sure, but because in a mameluke bit, in the high port, are not infrequently put several little rings . . . so that the horse may champ upon them.

R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

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A HATCHMENT

THE house, covered with creepers, and roofed with slabs of old grey stone, kept in their place by ridges of cement that looked like surf upon a beach that had become congealed, was only cut off from the churchyard by a wall.

The wall was built of yellowish stone, and, as the slabs upon the roof, was so much weathered that it looked like leather. Out of the crevices sprung pellitory and valerian.

So close were house and church that on a summer afternoon from the low-arched front door the voices of the congregation singing "Rock of Ages" seemed to blend with the humming of the insects in the trees.

Manor and churchyard were as near to one another as life is to death, only a step divided them.

At the first glance you saw the house had long been lived in by men rooted in the soil. It had an air of being cut off from the world,

although the entrance-gate opened upon the little village street.

Still, when you passed through the gate, and came to a flagged path between two pillars, each surmounted by a ball, you felt that you had come into an older life.

Certainly the house itself stood far removed from railways, and in years gone by you reached it either by a road that ran on windy downs and overlooked the sea, or by one through fields with an infinity of gates.

These gates I have got down to open scores of times, in the last thirty years, from a high dog-cart, in sunshine and in snow, in rain and in a south-west gale. You had to keep them open with a stone, and if the wind blew fresh they not infrequently shut to and grazed the wheel. The roads were poorly kept and flinty, and twisted in and out, now between hedges, all blown sideways by the prevailing south-west winds, till they had become a sort of mat of vegetation, hollow upon one side, and then came out into lush fields, or ran through copses, so that the world seemed almost remote, as in the Hebrides.

All this gave the peculiar feeling as of becoming, as it were, marooned, when you had

closed the entrance-gate behind you, and come tino the grounds, with their old mulberries, their golden yew, and the half-dozen flower-beds, set with geraniums and begonias. Things that you never noticed in the outside world became important, and you felt instantly you were identified in some strange way with the old mansion house, and that the affairs of those who owned it had in some manner now become your own.

Over the gable of the porch, set in cement, was a rough pot of earthenware. It stood a little leaning towards the churchyard, either as a perpetual *memento mori* to the dwellers in the house, or as a perpetual reminiscence of the carelessness of the masons who in the past had set it in its place.

You passed into the house through a front door, upon one side of which was a round hole cut in the masonry, just like a leper-squint in an old church, designed in times gone by to reconnoitre those who entered, and if required to fire upon them, if they appeared unfriends.

The hall was dark, paved with grey flags, and set about with animals and birds, all badly stuffed, and dusty and decayed. A smell of damp mixed with the scent of gun-

oil and of honey, of stale tobacco and of lavender, greeted your nostrils when you opened the front door. This smell, peculiar to the house, became not disagreeable when you were used to it.

I shall remember it always, and if by chance something recalls it to me, the old house rises in my mind. Its blackened pictures, furniture with little trains of dust below them showing where the worms had been at work upon the softer portions of the wood, its cold stone floors, its creaking stairs that bent and cracked and seemed to be about to break as you walked up them, and the mysterious noises as of footfalls, in the night, on the dark passages, made it a fitting habitation for the men who lived in it.

As those who live in them mould houses to their own tastes, giving them the stamp of their own idiosyncrasies, so does a house influence its owners, and put its mark upon them.

If this is so, most certainly the manor-house had set its mark upon the lady who owned it, when I first knew the place, now nearly forty years ago.

Left widowed early in her life, with three

small children to bring up, and in a place such as was the old manor-house, which fostered prejudices, secluded as it was in its deep valley far from the world, she had become, as it were, a squire in petticoats, gentle and kindly as to exterior but strong and resolute in the conduct of affairs.

Her dress was of no fashion in particular, but such as gentlewomen have worn with little change for the last fifty years in country places. Her hair, parted in the middle of her head and drawn down rather low about the ears, had not a single silver thread in it, though she had long passed middle age. The villagers—half agriculturists, half sailors and poachers to a man—adored, but stood in awe of her, and when they met her in the lanes, saluted her, with the old-fashioned wave of the right arm, doubling the right hand backward up against the chest and extricating it below the chin with the palm upwards in the air.

Kindness was in the marrow of her bones, but yet a kindness tempered with judgment, so that few of the villagers imposed upon her, though she was always ready to come to their assistance, if her help was required. Progress she looked at just a little bit askance, which

was but natural in her position, as it was new to her, and generally took the form of uprooting some old custom which in her eyes was beautiful, and putting nothing in its place.

Still the advance of education was as great a source of satisfaction to her as the decline of courtesy in speech, a cause of pain mixed with some not unnatural wonder that the increase of learning seemed to bring in its train a corresponding falling-off in manners and in kindliness.

Faith she was plentifully endowed with, not to the exclusion of good works, for if a woman was about to be confined or a man fell from a ladder, she turned her household upside down in her anxiety to send them soups and jellies, and bottles of port wine.

Herself the daughter of a clergyman, she had by right of birth a sort of left-handed interest in church government, in the same way a captain's daughter may think she has an innate gift for navigation, though in her case her theory if it is put in practice may lead to serious results.

On Sundays, seated in the chancel—for the manorial pew was in the precincts usually kept sacred for the choir—she listened to the service

with a rapt air, joining most conscientiously in the responses, which in those days were muttered rapidly by all the congregation, headed by the clerk.

Old-fashioned hymns, such as the long-forgotten "Oh, refresh us, travelling through this wilderness," sung usually to a dull grinding tune, were her especial favourites. She found them as she said more satisfying than the more modern ones, and more appropriate. The church in which she worshipped, and which stood so near her house, was a small Norman edifice, plain, but not quite devoid of blunt architectural beauty, with its pointed arches and its Elizabethan monuments, over one of which were hung the helmet, gauntlet, and a great jingling spur that once belonged to the dead warrior who kneeled in alabaster at the right-hand corner of the tomb.

The Creed and Ten Commandments were set up on each side of the altar, the words finely set forth in great white lettering, so that the wayfaring man although a fool need not err on the path toward salvation, if he had learned to read. Death took the lady of the manor, in her old painted bed-chamber adorned with scenes drawn by a wandering Dutch artist,

setting forth men going out hunting, all riding rather leggy horses and followed by their hounds.

She died as she had lived, occupied to the last minute of her life with parish duties, her infant school, and with the cares of her estate. The villagers mourned her sincerely, feeling they had lost a friend.

Her family laid her to rest beneath the flagstones of the chancel, on which during her lifetime her feet had rested for so many Sundays, as she sat listening to the sermon, with her head turned a little sideways, so as not to miss a word.

Her son—after he had given up the sea and returned home from South America, where he had acquired a Spanish, which, as a friend in reply to his mother's question if he spoke the language just like English, answered "exactly"—had settled down in the old house. Once settled, to the surprise of everyone, he manifested the same kind of interest as had his mother in the affairs both of the parish and the church.

Nothing but the advent of a new vicar with High Church ideas ousted him from the chancel, and when the Ten Commandments and the Creed were taken down, when he was away from home, and put up in a corner, he

had them back again, remarking, with a Spanish oath or two, "we are all Protestants." I had not thought during the many years we spent together in South America that Protestantism was very present to his mind; but after all it must have, as it were, lain dormant, as grains of wheat found in Egyptian tombs, when put into congenial soil, have fructified and taken root after a thousand years.

The old house had claimed him, and from henceforth there were to be no more wild rides on the south Pampa, no nights in boats lying outside the mouth of rivers on the Gold Coast, for my friend. England is full of country houses, houses in which the family has spent its manhood for generations only to keep the roof watertight and the garden weeded, and yet their owners have passed adventurous years of youth abroad, and now sit waiting, as it were, for the last Tally-ho, and judging poachers on the Bench. Not that my Protestant ex-partner thought his lot a hard one, or that he ever shirked his duty either in the hunting-field or at Quarter Sessions, for he was, as he might have said himself, "dog-game," and besides was sustained by the gift of humour, that gift which next to faith makes life endurable.

So when he stood, bound in his hat and hosen, and with top-boots on, at his own door, waiting for his horse, watching the rain descend and churn the gravel paths, he used to say, "Fancy a man who sat so many miserable nights herding stock out upon the plains doing this sort of thing for fun."

At Quarter Sessions he must have introduced an air almost of the outside world, according to the story which he used to tell of an exploit of his own. "You see, old man," he said, "there was a silly devil of a labourer, somewhere by Litton Cheney, who had some row or other with his wife. Perhaps she nagged at him—God knows!—anyhow the fool went and jumped down a well. When he got there"—this he said just as if the man had gone upon a journey—"there was about five feet of water in the place.

"His courage failed him, and he halloaed out for help, and someone heard him yelling, and went and fetched a rope. They got him out, and charged him with attempting suicide.

"Some of those fellows on the Bench took quite a serious view of it. Plug-headed idiots, if they'd seen as many horse thieves hung as we have—eh what, eh? but they began to jaw.

One duffer wanted to send the poor brute off to the Assizes, and it looked as if the rest were going to agree, though one or two stood out.

"Then up got a sort of writing-fellow, lived near Dorchester, used to come out occasionally with the Catstock, reins in a bunch, you know, longish hair, that sort of thing, no seat, not a bad sort of man. He began talking nineteen to the dozen about the inalterable right a fellow has to control his destiny. . . . My God, quoted Marcus Aurelius to the Bench . . . if a fellow has a smoky house, you know . . . fancy that sort of chat to a lot of men who had been at public schools, and never knew a word of Latin in their lives. Good, eh, what?

"Well, he was just getting up their backs. I saw old Lord Debenham putting on the kind of face that he has when he reads the lessons in Debenham Church; so I chipped in, first time I'd ever said anything . . . last, too, for that matter, and I said let's look at the thing in a reasonable way.

"'This four-storied fool didn't know he was committing any crime; what he did comes under the Trespass Act. . . . Yes, eh, trespassing in another fellow's well. Fine him a

shilling.' The writing-man was mad, but I grabbed him by the coat-tails, and old Lord Debenham's face relaxed a bit. Rest of the beaks laughed . . . and I paid the shilling, and gave the man another, and told him he had most awful luck, and would have to go back to his wife."

These exercises or sports kept my friend in good health without laying too great a tax upon his intellectual powers, and left him time to devote himself to the furthering of evangelical Christianity throughout the neighbourhood. The vicar, who had removed the symbols of our faith from their position guarding the altar, as Gog and Magog guarded the Guild-hall, soon moved his squire to wrath, for the familiar black gown was no more seen on Sunday, nor were a good half-dozen collects used before the sermon was begun. His mis-doings culminated when choral service was introduced, and the word "Vicarage" was painted on the gate.

Seated one evening in his smoking-room, which contained relics of his life in South America, such as a pair of *bolas* hung between two prints of stage-coaches stuck in the snow, a silver-headed whip, and a *lazo* neatly coiled

and carefully greased, "You see," he said, "I like to keep the thing in order, though you can get no ostrich grease to soften it, in this God-forsaken place," he told how he had got the better of the vicar, and forced him to resign. The room was low, and as the grate had always smoked since it was first put in, and the green wood required a world of paper and attention to keep it going, the ceiling was as black as is the top of an Indian's *teepee*, or as a Gaucho's hut upon the plains. The prints, chiefly of houses in the county, looked as if they had been executed in a mist, and on the bookshelves, when you took down the *Black Assize* or Camden's *Britannia* (both, of course, in folio), your fingers left their impress, in the dust of years, upon them.

After having had the workmen in, to pay their wages, treating them just as he would have treated privy councillors, asking them to be seated, and handing them his own tobacco pouch, he launched into his tale.

"Old man," he said, "that vicar was too much, a regular Jesuit, auricular confession, and all that sort of thing. I had to bolt him.' He spoke as if the clergyman had been a rabbit. "What do you think I did? Eh,

what? I got the Yellow Van down . . . cost quite a lot of money, camped it outside his gate . . . 'Vicarage' painted on it, ugh! I used to go and listen to the rot they talked. Enough to make a brass monkey sick . . . regular four-storied, magnolia-scented, gilt-edged rot. Still, the fellow wouldn't go . . . got his off-stirrup, as you may say, and settled in his seat.

"People did begin to look a little shy of him, but still he stuck to it, sulking at the bottom of the hole.

"Then I had a brilliant inspiration, and got a dozen or two of the *Priest's Manual on Confession*—that's what they call the damned thing, I think—and gave 'em out all round the village: that had the desired effect. The villagers, you remember there were a beastly lot of Baptists amongst them, never went near the parish church, but still hated the idea of the confessional and all that sort of thing, used to call their children, and bang the doors in his face when the vicar walked down the street.

"He stood it for a month and then resigned. Now I've got a fellow, so to speak, of my own—Welshman, I think he is—a rotten preacher, not a bad sort of chap, and quite a Protestant."

Years passed, and by degrees my friend grew more confirmed in all his habits, if possible kindlier to all his servants and dependents, but more disposed to show himself a cynic in his dealings with the world.

To the last he thought he was a Liberal, but in reality no one could possibly have been more thoroughly conservative, but not reactionary in regard to politics. In literature and science he always kept abreast of all new movements to the last day of his life.

Little by little the old manor-house fell into decay, for narrow circumstances always prevented him from doing more than what he called "scraping along the bottom," and by degrees one room after another became untenantable. The first to go was one of the old painted chambers, over which the roof bulged in so ominously that no one could be found willing to occupy the room. Damp gained upon the house, and in the little room just on the right hand of the porch, which once had been a sort of boudoir, the paddle fell from the Indian maiden's hand, of the wax model of a Mexican canoe, piled up with vegetables.

Loneliness and seclusion from the world drew a dark cloud over my friend's last years, and he who had passed his life either at sea, or on his horse upon the plains, sat the whole day before the fire, reading and dozing in his smoking-room.

With his death came the closing of the chapter, and to-day the old house stands tenantless, and the long line of gentlefolks who once inhabited it is ended.

All of them now have taken the short journey past the manor-house to the damp churchyard, of which the passing bell during their lifetime must so often have reminded them . . . though they were not the kind of men whom death ever intimidated.

Damp gathers on the cobwebbed windows of the old stables, that stables towards which they turned their steps each morning after breakfast, almost with the air of one who goes to church.

In the deserted kitchen garden, bindweed climbs on the bushes, and groundsel has usurped the vegetable beds; only a row of posts shows where the beehives once stood in a well-ordered row.

If the ghost of my departed friend haunts the

old house, where he once lived, I see it just as he was himself in life—short, active, dark, with the thick, sleek hair that he preserved till the last moment of his life, his eyes prominent, and a little bloodshot in the corners, his hands small and well-cared-for, and his feet disproportionately large.

I think if ghosts can walk, that there can be no reason that we can allege against their riding, so I imagine that his shade stands waiting at the door, until they bring his shadowy horse for him to mount. There he stands, muttering now and then, "Eh, what, eh, a damned long time they take to saddle up a horse," and then mounting him lightly in one motion as we used to do upon the plains, rides slowly up the hill till he arrives at the old Knoll House on the hill that overlooks the sea. There he dismounts, I fancy, and the horse vanishes, whilst he, lighting an insubstantial cigarette of ship's tobacco, sits down on the fine grassy turf, that flows up to the foundations of the ruined masonry, and gazes seaward, drinking in the view that he most loved in life. The wide expanse of down, nothing but grass and sky, like the south Pampa, stretches out to Portland Bill.

The pebbly beach, on which the water goes down sheer only a few yards from the edge, runs like a serpent all along the coast, up to the great lagoon of Abbotsbury.

Far in the offing fishing-boats dotted the sea with their white sails, just as the swans dotted the waters of the decoy.

All that he sees, and feels the fresh breeze on his cheek, coming up from the south-west.

LOS INDIOS

No one who has not lived upon the southern Pampa in the days when a staunch horse was of more value in time of trouble than all the prayers of all the good men of the world, can know how constantly the fear of Indians was ever present in men's minds.

The Indiada of the old Chief Catriel was permanently camped outside Bahia Blanca. They lived in peace with all their neighbours; but on the sly maintained relations with Los Indios Bravos, such as the Pampas, Ranqueles, Pehuelches and the rest who, though they had their Toldos out on the Salinas Grandes, and dotted all the way along the foothills of the Andes right up to the lake of Nahuel-Huapi and down to Cholechél, occasionally burst like a thunder-cloud upon the inside camps, as suddenly as a *pampero* blew up from the south.

All their incursions, known to the Gauchos as *malones*, were made by the same trails.

They either entered the province near the town of Tapalquén, by the great waste between the Romero Grande and the Cabeza del Buey, or through the pass, right at the top of the Sierra de la Ventana, the curious hill with the strange opening in it, from which it takes its name.

The terror and romance of the south frontier were centred in the Indian tribes. When they broke in amongst the great *estancias* of the south, all but the chiefs riding upon a sheep-skin, or without even that, carrying a lance made of a bamboo, fifteen to twenty feet in length, the point a sheep-shear, fastened to the shaft by a piece of a cow's tail, or other bit of hide wrapped round it green, then left to dry till it became as hard as iron, and with a tuft of horse-hair underneath the blade, looking like a human scalp, the deer and ostriches all fled in front of them, just as the spindrift flies before a wave.

Each warrior led a spare horse, taught to run easily beside him, and leave his hand free for the spear. They rode like demons of the night, their horses all excited by the fury of their charge, leaping the small *arroyas*, changing their feet like goats upon a stony place,

and brushing through the high grasses with a noise as of a boat crashing through reeds. Now and again they struck their hands upon their mouths to make their yells, a loud prolonged "Ah, Ah, Ah—a—a," more wild and terrifying.

Each warrior carried round his waist two or three pair of *bolas;* the two large balls hanging on the left side, and the small hand-ball, on the right, just resting on the hip. All had long knives or swords, which as a rule they shortened for convenience of carriage to about the length of a sword-bayonet, wearing them stuck between the girth and the skirt of the saddle, if they should chance to have a saddle, and if they had none, stuck through a narrow woollen sash made by their women in the Tolderias, worked in strange, stiff, concentric patterns, bound round their naked waists. All were smeared over with a coat of ostrich grease, though never painted, and their fierce cries and smell were terrifying to the Gauchos' horses, making them mad with fear. Some twenty paces in advance rode the *cacique*, sometimes upon a silver-mounted saddle, choosing if possible a black horse to set it off well, and with his silver reins, seven feet in

length, held high in his left hand as, spurring furiously, he turned occasionally to yell out to his men, grasping his spear about the middle as he careered along.

To meet them thus, alone upon the plains, say when alone upon a lazy horse, out looking up strayed cattle, was an experience not easily forgotten . . . and one which he who had it remembered vividly, if he escaped their lynx-eyed scouting, up to his dying day.

Your only chance, unless, as was unlikely, you had a *pingo* "fit for God's saddle," as the Gauchos said, was to alight, and having led your horse into a hollow, to muffle up his head in the folds of your *poncho*, to stop him neighing, and keep as still as death. Then, if you had not been perceived, and little on the plains escaped an Indian's eye, you almost held your breath, until the thunder of the Indians' horses' feet had died away, and mounting with your heart thumping against your sides, cautiously stole up the hollow, and getting off again, holding your horse by a long rope, peeped stealthily over the brow to see if all was clear. If out upon the plains you saw the ostriches the deer or cattle running, or dust arise without a cause, you had to get

back to the hollow and wait a little. Lastly, when you were certain all had passed, you drew the *latigo* of the hide-cinch, placing your foot against the horse's side to get more purchase, till he was like an hour-glass with the strain. Then mounting, you touched him with the spur, and galloped for dear life, till you got to a house, shouting as you rode up . . . "*Los Indios*" . . . a cry which brought every male Christian running to the door.

Quickly the tame horses would be driven up and shut in the corral; all the old arms loaded and furbished up; for, strange as it may sound, the Gauchos of the south, although they were exposed to constant inroads of the Indians, never had anything but an old blunderbuss or so, or a pair of flint-lock pistols, and those out of repair.

The Indians themselves, having no arms but spears and *bolas*, were seldom formidable except out on the plain. A little ditch, not five feet deep and eight or ten across, kept a house safe from them, for as they never left their horses, they could not cross it, and as they came to plunder, not especially to kill, they wasted little time upon such places, unless they knew that there were young and handsome

women shut up in the house. "Christian girl, she more big, more white than Indian," they would say, and woe betide the unlucky girl who fell into their hands.

Hurried off to the Toldos, often a hundred leagues away, they fell, if young and pretty, to the chiefs. If not, they had to do the hardest kind of work; but in all cases, unless they gained the affections of their captor, their lives were made a burden by the Indian women, who beat and otherwise ill-used them on the sly.

Such were the Indians on the warpath, from San Luis de la Punta, right down to Cholechél. Stretches of "camp" now under corn were then deserted or, at the best, roamed over by *manades* of wild mares.

A chain of forts, starting upon the Rio Quinto and running north and south, was supposed to hold the Indians in check; but in reality did little, as they slipped through to plunder, quite at their own sweet will. The mysterious territory known by the name of "Tierra Adentro," began at Las Salinas Grandes, and stretched right to the Andes, through whose passes the Indians, by the help of their first cousins, the Araucanians, conveyed such of the cattle and the mares they

did not want, to sell or to exchange for silver horse-gear, known to the Gauchos by the name of Chafalonia Pampa, and highly coveted as having no alloy.

In type and habits there was little difference between La Indiada Mansa of the Chief Catriel and their wild brethren of the plains. Both were a yellow coppery colour, not tall, but well proportioned, all but their legs, which were invariably bowed by their lives passed on horseback from their youth. Both sexes wore the hair long, cut square across the forehead and hanging down the back, and both had rather flat and brutal faces, and all the men had restless eyes, perpetually fixed on the horizon as if they lived in fear.

Their beards were sparse, their constitutions hardy, and men and women both went down to the stream and bathed before the sun rose, taking care to be prepared to pour a calabash of water on the ground when the first rays appeared.

I see them now, coming back in a long string from the water, and hear their salutation "Mari-Mari" as they passed dripping on their way, their long black hair, lustrous and heavy, hanging loose down their backs.

Tierra Adentro served the wilder Gauchos

for a sure refuge in their times of trouble, to which to fly after some "trouble" or another, in which some man had lost his life, or to escape from serving in some revolutionary force or any other cause.

José Hernandez, in his celebrated *Martin Fierro*, has described how Cruz and his friend took refuge with the Indians, and well do I remember, for we all knew the whole book by heart, taking my turn for a hundred lines or so, round the camp fire, out on the Napostá. The wood engraving, primitive and cheap, in which Cruz and Martin were shown jogging on at the Trotecito wrapped in their *ponchos*, driving the *tropilla;* and with the foal, looking like a young camel, bringing up the rear, is quite as well fixed in my memory as is the picture of the Conde Duque, the Emperor Charles the Fifth at Mulhouse, Las Hilanderas, or any other work of art.

The line beneath it always impressed us, and we all tried to get the last verses to recite, so as to round up with the epic, "Al fin, por una madrugada clara, viceron las ultimas poblaciones," the *poblaciones* being, if I remember rightly, some low and straw-thatched *ranchos*, surrounded by a ditch.

Their subsequent adventures are they not set down with some prolixity in La Vuelta de Martin?

The serious side of Tierra Adentro was in the refuge it afforded to revolutionary chiefs. The brothers Saá and Colonel Baigoiria held a sort of sub-command for years, under the great Cacique Painé, and to them came all the discontented and broken men, whom they formed into a kind of flying squadron, ranging the frontiers with the Indians, as fierce and wild as they.

All kinds of Christian women, from the poor China girl, carried off like a mare from an *estancia*, to educated women from the towns, and once even a *prima donna*, journeying from Cordoba to Mendoza, were to be found in that mysterious Inside Land. On one occasion a lady carried off from San Luis found herself about to be the prey of several chiefs, who were preparing to settle matters by a fight.

Throwing herself about Baigoiria's neck, who happened to be there, she cried, "Save me, *compadre*," and he, after some trouble, took her to his house. There he had several other wives; but white women, prisoners amongst

the Indians, were said never to quarrel, so that they lived with a white man. Their fate with Indians was not much to be envied, except as in the case of the great Chief Painé, who for ten years at least was ruled by a white girl he took at the sack of an *estancia*, somewhere near Tapalquén.

In the Arcadia of the Tolderias, especially in those close by the apple forests of the Andes, the life of those who dwelt in them must have been a survival of another age, without a parallel in all the world.

In North America, the Indian tribes all had traditions of their own, a polity and a religion, often complicated.

Amongst the Toldos of the Pampas, except a perfunctory sun-worship and a most real faith in the Gualichu, that evil spirit to which mankind in every age has paid at least as much attention as to the principle of good, nothing of old traditions had been left. They lived almost exactly like the Gauchos, with the exception that they grew a little maize, and fed on mare's flesh, instead of beef. The Indian's *toldo* was but little inferior to the Gaucho's hut. Most of the Indians spoke a little Spanish. Both Indian and Gaucho wore the same clothes (the Indians

when they could get them) in time of peace. In time of war, they went about almost stark naked, save for a breech-clout, and generally the hat was, as it is to Arabs, the stumbling-block, the Indians preferring to have their long black locks well dressed with mare's grease, or with ostrich oil, as a protection from the sun. Their carelessness of life and their contempt of death exceeded that even of their first cousins and deadly enemies the Gauchos, of whom it is said that one of them coming to see his friend, found him in the agonies of rheumatic fever, and after having looked at him compassionately, said, "Poor fellow, how he suffers," and drawing out his knife took the sufferer by the beard and cut his throat. Cutting of throats was a subject of much joking both amongst Gauchos and the Indians. Amongst the former it was called to "do the holy office," and a coward was said to be mean about his throat if at the last he showed the slightest fear. The agonies and struggles of a dying man were summed up briefly, "he put out his tongue when I began to play the violin" (i.e. with the knife), phrases and actions which had their counterpart or origin amongst the Indians.

I who write this have seen the Indian children playing carnival, with hearts of sheep and calves for scent bottles, squirting out blood on one another in the most natural way.

At the rejoicings in the Tolderias, after a successful *malon* or raid in some *estancia*, the amount of mare's flesh that the Indians used to eat was quite phenomenal. Some of them hardly stopped to cook it, or at the best but scorched it at the fire. Some ate it raw, drinking the blood like milk, and when half drunk—for *caña* was never wanting in the Toldos—and well daubed over with the blood, it made one wonder whether the chain connecting man with the orang-outang had any link with them.

Their choicest delicacy was the fat piece along a young colt's neck; this they ate always raw, and I remember once having to taste it in response to a compliment addressed me by a young warrior, who yelling "There's a good Christian," thrust the fat dripping meat into my unwilling hand. The effect was lasting, and to this day I cannot look on a piece of green turtle fat floating in the soup without remembering the Indian delicacy.

Well, well, the Toldas, those on the edge of

the great apple forests of the Andes, and those between Las Salinas Grandes and the Lago Argentino, all are gone. All the wild riders now ride in Trapalanda, the mysterious city in which no Christian ever breathes his horse. Over the treacherous Guadál the Vizcachera, or through the middle of a Cangrejál, no more wild horsemen gallop, certain to fall upon their feet, if their horse step into a hole; or if they chanced to fail to land upon their feet, rise and leap on from the off-side leaning upon their spear.

No longer, on a journey, will they, as it appeared without a cause, suddenly strike their hands upon their mouths and yell, and then when asked the reason, answer, "Huinca, he foolish; Auca do that because first see the sierra," as in the days of yore.

Round the Gualichu tree, no longer bands from north and south will meet, and whilst within its influence forbear to fight; even refrain from stealing a fine horse during the time they celebrate their medicine dance. In separating, no Indian now will tear a piece from off his *poncho* and stick it on a thorn; the tree was a Chañar if I remember right.

Men looking for strayed horses, sleeping

beside some lonely river no longer have to shiver half the night on guard, and burn their feet against the fire, placed in a hollow, dug with their knives in the green turf, so as to show no light, till it was time to saddle up and march.

No one will travel, as I did with a friend, now riding as I hope in some mysterious Trapalanda of his own (fit for men of no faith, but in good works), from Tapalquén down to the Sauce Grande, passing no house that was not burned and sacked, except a chance *estancia* surrounded by a ditch and full of women and of wounded men. We started with an alarm of Indians at Tapalquén, the plaza full of men all arming, and with wild-eyed and yelling countrymen galloping in on foaming horses, calling out "*Los Indios*," what time the *comandante*, seated in a cane-chair, sat taking *maté* as he passed his rough recruits in an extemporaneous review.

We camped on the Arroyo de los Huesos, swam the Quequen Salado, buried a man we found dead at Las Tres Horquetas, and after a week's riding, through camps swept clear of cattle and of mares, came to the Sauce Grande just in time to take a hand in a brief skirmish

and see the Indians drive off the few remaining horses in the place.

Those times are gone, and now the plough breaks up the turf that had remained intact and virgin since the creation of the world.

A RETROSPECT

When they had let the anchor go with a loud splash into the yellow, muddy water, nothing was in sight. By degrees several steam-tugs and then a fleet of whale-boats, manned by Genoese, came bounding over the short choppy waves. They seemed to come from nowhere, as no land was visible as far as one could see. All round our ship lay other vessels, rolling about, almost to show their coppers, Genoese and French and English, with a great raking barquentine, hailing from Portland Maine.

Until the tugs and whale-boats had appeared, one could not fathom why so many ships had anchored all together, out of sight of land, in such a choppy sea. Ten minutes' steaming in a whale-boat brought into sight the tops of churches, cupolas and towers, and a few tall palm trees, and then five minutes afterwards a town, white, flat-roofed, Oriental-looking, that seemed to spring out of the waves.

It gradually grew clearer, and to the west appeared a low *barranco*, but still the town had no foundation, till the steam-tug had gone a little further in. Then the whole town grew clear, that is to say, the portion of it nearest to the river-bank, for the ground was so flat, the nearest houses blocked the rest from sight, giving the effect of a long line of white against the yellow water, broken by several round and red-tiled cupolas.

Eventually, after a passage of some fifteen miles, which left the fleet of anchored steamers quite hull down, the muddy bank on which the town stood was revealed. A wooden mole, broken in places—it was a sempiternal joke in Don Patricio Mulhall's English paper, the *Buenos Aires Standard*, which he served up every week, under the heading of the "Hole in the Mole"—ran out a little, say, about a hundred yards, towards the sea.

The water generally was too shoal for the steam-launches to land their passengers, these usually sea-sick and wet, for the three leagues of water were nearly always rough, and the short, broad-beamed launches, knocked about and plunged like a wild horse, a swarm of shore boats, chiefly manned by Neapolitans

and Genoese, came out and hung about the launches, just as they had hung about the ocean-going ships. Those who were wise refused to enter them until they had struck a bargain with these pirates of the shore, for as there was no tariff, or if there was, no one attended to it, you might be asked five or six dollars for the few hundred yards. You landed at the slippery stairs, all overgrown with barnacles, and stumbled up upon the pier, when for the first time you had a full view of the town.

Mostly all heavy merchandise was transferred from shore-going boats to bullock-carts, primitive-looking in construction, and with solid wheels. The driver, usually a Basque, banged on the oxen's horns with a stout, wooden mallet as he sat cross-legged on the yoke. The effect of all these various transhipments was to make the landing goods almost as dear as the whole freight from Europe to the Plate. When you had run the gauntlet of the Custom House, which in those days was a most serious affair, you emerged upon some low, arcaded streets, inhabited almost entirely by Italians of the seafaring class. They sat in villainous dark cafés, all playing cards and drinking *grappa*,

and from the cafés came a babel of all the dialects of their peninsula.

What struck one, even there amongst those shell-backs, where everything was redolent of the sea, was that a horse or two was standing hobbled about the door of every house. When you emerged and entered one or other of the deep streets, running between raised pavements three or four feet high, you met more horses. Men selling milk on horseback, these were chiefly Basques; men carrying nets for fishing; men with reeking hides freshly stripped off spread on their horses' backs; sleek business men on English saddles, made of cheap leather and abominably cut—all passed you, riding, and every horse you saw at first sight had a mouth like silk, the kind of mouth a man in Europe dreams of but never sees; and here, even the horses that the poorest rode, all had it, and all bent their necks as if they had been put through all the airs of the best *manège* in the world. All of them had their manes cut into an arch, leaving a mounting lock upon the withers, about two spans in width, and all had tails that would have swept the ground had they not been just squared off at the pasterns to keep them from the mud.

The deep streets led up to the chief plaza, a huge arcaded square, with many old colonial buildings in it. The house of the Conquistador, Don Juan Garay, now swept away as ruthlessly as if it had been an old church in London, stood at one corner of the square. It was, if I remember rightly, a low, flat-roofed building, with overhanging eaves, built to resist all time, and should have been preserved in a land where few monuments exist, as carefully as an old beau preserves his last front tooth, as a memorial of the past.

Other old buildings there were none, except the cathedral, built at an inartistic time, and looking like almost every other church in the New World, from the Franciscan Missions in Arizona and in Texas down to that of Patagones, all of which even the great cathedrals of Mexico and Puebla were of Jesuit architecsure, with a Græco-Roman façade and a great cupola, like a gigantic beehive, rising from the centre of the pile.

One church I had forgotten, and one no Englishman should pass, unnoticed, that of St. Dominic.

In it the kind and tutelary saint had placed the power to catch and hold, so that succeeding

ages might see and marvel, the heretic cannon-balls fired by the Lutheran General Whitelocke when he attacked the town. In days of greater faith, or perhaps before the masonry had given way, the church held dozens, but in my time there were but three, which Admajorem Dei Gloriam remained a witness to the faith, both of the present generation and the past.

Inside the church, high up in the west aisle, there used to hang, and I suppose still do so, the colours of three British regiments of the line. A timely warning, as I used to think, to pride, and one which when men were well filled with new wine I used to show them, inviting them to pat their diaphragms and whistle "Rule Britannia" with the best grace they could. Not that I was not a good patriot, but because I thought, then in my youth, just as I do to-day, that patriotism begins at home, and if St. Dominic appeared and really caught those balls, he did it not, as a saint, but as an Argentine, for saints, I take it, when the celestial telephone is rung, are of the nationality of those who pray to them. In those days, now so far off and forgotten, the city still preserved to some

extent its old colonial look. The greater portion of the houses had flat roofs, though here and there an ugly block of modern buildings, generally overladen with detail, sprung up and dwarfed their fellows, looking like stucco icebergs in a great sea of bricks. One or two houses, such as those of the Auchorenas and the Lumbs, had just been built in a half-Italian style, with *patios* of marble, filled with palms, with fountains, and with a great opaque glass ball of enormous size, balanced or fastened to a marble pillar, reminding one that after all the world turns round upon its axis, and that the luck may change.

Meat was sold at about ten cents the kilo, and bread was dearer than it was in Paris. Flour was imported from Chile and the United States, whilst all clothes came ready-made from Europe, and were both bad and dear.

Almost the entire male population dressed in black, and nearly everyone wore turned-down collars, cut very low upon the neck, and kept in place by narrow neckties like a shoe-string, and no one carried sticks. In fact, a walking-stick was the mark of a new-comer, what was called in those days *un recien*

yegao, for pronunciation of the language followed a system of its own. Men prided themselves upon the smallness of their feet, as if they had been women, although the race was most athletic, and except at Mass or at great social functions, all wore black floppy hats. After a rainstorm, all the side streets became fierce watercourses, owing to the height of the side walks, and men with planks, which they stretched over from one pavement to the other, reaped a rich harvest from those who wished to cross.

A mile or two above the town men fished on horseback, riding their horses deep into the water, and after having made a circle with the rope fastened to their girths, galloping to the shore. Tramways had been established for a few months, and yet abounded, for no one walked who possibly could ride, and twenty yards before each car galloped a boy upon a horse, blowing upon a horn.

One of the chief sights of the place as I remember then, was the great square before the Stock Exchange. Hundreds of horses stood about hobbled, all with their reins fastened behind the cantle of the saddle, making them arch their necks like rocking-

horses. They seldom moved, as they were hobbled short by the forelegs, but now and then turned round, and now and then, one of them who was *baqueano*, with his hobbles, if he espied a friend, would raise his hobbled feet and hop across to him. Perhaps their conversation was as intelligent as was that of those who had brought them there, and of a surety was more innocent. To a new-comer it seemed perilous to adventure upon foot into a maelstrom of four-footed beasts, such as the one that stood before the Bourse, on almost every morning in those days. However, as one of the peculiarities of the breed was that they never bit and hardly ever kicked, one soon grew used to it, and pushed one's way between, quite as contemptuously as if they had been all endowed with reason and gamblers upon 'Change.

The hotels were few and relatively poor, and most of them were situated in or about the Calle Veinte Cinco de Mayo, from the fashionable "Argentino" down to Claraz's, a little hostelry kept by a Swiss, a man of learning though an hotel-keeper, since widely known by his flora of the Pampa. "Camp" men, who often passed amongst their country-

men, if they were English, under the name of "Gentle Shepherds," sea captains, mining engineers, and foreign journalists were the chief pillars of the place. A usual sight was the arrival of some sunburned man dressed in a well-cut, but frayed tweed suit, a grey felt hat, a flannel shirt without a collar, and his *recao* tied in a bundle, and carried by a *changador*, which was the name that the Portenõs gave to porters, who nearly all were Basques.

The Gentle Shepherd generally shouted "Claraz," and was met by the tall black-haired and black-bearded Swiss, like an old friend.

Paying his *changador*, he asked who else was in the house, and when he heard their names summoned them all to drink. Then after this half-sacramental action, he got down his portmanteau or his box, which Claraz always kept for him up in some attic, and dressed himself in his best clothes, always a little creased, and sallied forth either on business or to impart vermilion to the town; but always wearing his soft hat, the outward visible sign of the interior grace of the true "camp" man, come to town. The little hostelry was built upon the plan of a monastery, with rooms

like cells opening out from a corridor. The last of them, which in those times was mine on the occasions when I was in town, looked right upon the river, and on fine days one saw the houses of La Colonia, in the Republic of Uruguay, some thirty miles away.

It was expedient not to sit reading late at night at Claraz's, for it might happen that a Gentle Shepherd coming back after an evening spent in merriment, might try to shoot your candle out, a thing that has happened at least once or twice to the writer of these lines.

Each nationality had its Claraz's Hotel, which though not owned by Claraz, yet was run more or less on the same lines, with due allowance for the national characteristics of the guests. The other hotels were, of course, much more cosmopolitan, but all of them, except the "Argentino," had a homely air, which has long disappeared from all hotels in every quarter of the globe. Society was then not so exclusive as it has become, and foreigners who spoke the language all were well received. Few Argentines spoke English, and not too many French, and with the exception of a few of the richer families who had been in Europe, an evening's enter-

tainment was in the style I recollect in my youth, in Seville and throughout southern Spain. The ladies sat on chairs in a great circle round the room, and men lounged at the doors, and now and then one would advance and ask a girl to dance. This dance was generally a valse, danced very slowly to the music of a jingly piano, and when it finished you slowly led your partner to her seat, and stood beside her murmuring the most elementary compliments. At older-fashioned houses still they danced the *cielito* and the *pericón*—curious old-world and picturesque survivals of an older age, and which perhaps are just as worthy of remembrance as will be the "Cake-Walk" and the "One-Step" when they are obsolete.

Women, except those of the poorer classes, seldom walked about alone, but in the evening, under the care of fathers, mothers, and the like, they swarmed in the Calle Rivadavia, which in those days was the chief promenade of the town.

There, walking up and down, they listened to those *flores*, which have from time immemorial been the custom of the Spanish youth to offer to the fair.

In fact, in those days, Buenos Aires still was a colonial city, but just emerging from its past. Great lines of steamships were just beginning to dump their cargoes of Italians and of Basques. Still, there was little difference on the whole between the various classes, and balls were given in the ground-floor rooms of old colonial houses, through whose enormous grated windows the populace gazed, smoking, and criticized the dancers, sometimes appreciatively, at others adversely, and always something in the spirit of prospective buyers at a fair.

The theatres were good and large, and in those days better constructed and more modern than those of London or of Paris, although their prices were enormous, taking into consideration the simple life led by the citizens.

The coinage was depreciated, the paper dollar standing at twopence-halfpenny, and the chief silver, the Bolivian four-real piece, a coin which with its llama and its palm, rough execution, and strange colour, looked like an ancient Roman denarius, and was much counterfeited.

No view of Buenos Aires of those times would be complete without a glance at the side temples of the Paphian goddess, she who

came from the sea-foam, according to the Greeks, but who the Christian Church averred to have had her origin in mud.

Few towns could have been better kept supplied than was the city of good airs, with raw material. Spaniards and Greeks, Italians, French, English, Mulattresses (all with the *catinga*), Algerian Jewesses and girls from Paraguay, gazed from the windows of the great *casa amueblada* in 25th of May Street.

In bars and in tobacco shops they swarmed, and that in spite of licensed houses by the score.

Some, such as the great *quilombo* at what the English know as "one, two, three," *Cerrito* (*Cerrito*, 123), were models in their way.

Inside them all was looking-glass, walls, tables, roofs, and chairs. Upon them lounged the priestesses, and it was fashionable in those days to take one's coffee after dinner there. I have seen an august personage, one set above his fellows by the popular vote, stroll in and sit down in a chair, light a cigar and drink his coffee, chatting the while with all the ladies of the place, so affably that you would not suspect by the enumeration of a few thousand noses, he had become a god.

Such was the city in those days, with but a population of three hundred thousand souls.

The suburbs, Palermo and Las Flores, were just growing, and at El Tigre and La Boca, the industries that have arisen since lay in the lap of time. But a short league or two away, stretched the flat camps of Quilmes and El Monte Grande, their grass short, sweet, and eaten down by sheep, green as an emerald in the early spring, then carpeted with La Flor Morada, with red verbena; a dusty brown in summer, but soon turning green again at the first autumn rain.

It was a city of good air, and the old Spanish captain, he who sailed with Don Pedro de Mendoza, that gentleman of Almeria, once Chamberlain to Charles V, was right when he first felt the wind coming across the Pampa from the south and looking round remarked, "Que buenos, son los aires de aqui."

Although we knew it not, being perhaps more occupied with life than with political economy, the city held within itself the germs of all it has become. I know that it is great and prosperous, wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice; that the great liners all tie up at stone-built docks, and passengers step from them

into their motor-cars. All this I know, and I am glad, for *anche io fú pittore*, that is, I used to ride along the streets of the old Buenos Aires generally upon a little *doradillo*, that I had, with the great silver spurs just hanging off my heels when I rode up to Claraz's Hotel, after delivering a troop of cattle at the *saladero*, on the outskirts of the town.

So may a man who in his youth has seen a gipsy dancer, brown, active, thin, and has admired her from afar, when he has met her in his after life, married to a capitalist, splendid in jewels and in Paris clothes, still think that she looked better in her print skirt and frayed Manila shawl.

EL RODEO

THE vast, brown, open space, sometimes a quarter of a mile across, called El Rodeo, which bears the same relation to the ocean of tall grass that a shoal bears to the surface of the sea, was the centre of the life of the great cattle *estancias* of the plains. To it on almost every morning of the year the cattle were collected and taught to stand there till the dew was off the grass. To *parar rodeo* was the phrase the Gauchos used, equivalent to the cowboys' "round up" on the northern plains.

An hour before the dawn, when the moon was down, but the sun not up, just at the time when the first streaks of red begin to fleck the sky, the Gauchos had got up from their *recaos*.* In those days it was a point of honour to sleep on the *recao*, the *carona* spread out on the ground, the *jergas* on it, the *cojinillo* underneath the hips for softness, the head pillowed upon *los bastos*, and under them your pistol, knife, your

* Argentine saddle made in several pieces, which comprised the *carona*, *jergos*, and *cojinillo* and *los bastos*.

tirador, and boots, yourself wrapped up in your *poncho* and with your head tied up in a handkerchief. The Gauchos had looked out in the frost or dew, according to the season of the year, to see the horse they had tied up overnight had not got twisted in his stake-rope, and then returned to sit before the fire to take a *matecito cimarron* and smoke. Every now and then a man had left the fire, and, lifting the dried mare's-hide that served for door, had come back silently, and, sitting down again, taken a bit of burning wood, ladling it from the fire, upon his knife's edge, and lit his cigarette. At last, when the coming dawn had lit the sky like an Aurora Borealis lights a northern winter's night, they had risen silently, and shouldering their saddles, had gone out silently to saddle up.

Outside the horses stood and shivered on their ropes, their backs arched up like cats about to fight. Frequently when their intending rider had drawn the pin to which they were attached, and after coiling up the rope approached them warily, they sat back snorting like a steam-engine when it breasts a hill. If it was possible, the Gaucho saddled his horse after first hobbling his front feet, although he

was sure to throw the saddle-cloths and the *carona* several times upon the ground. When they were put firmly upon his back, the rider, cautiously stretching his naked foot under the horse's belly, caught up the cinch between his toes. Passing the *latigo* between the strong iron rings both of the *encimera* and the cinch, he put his foot against the horse's side and pulled till it was like an hour-glass, which operation not infrequently set the horse bucking, hobbled as he was.

If, on the other hand, the horse was but half-tamed, a *redomon* as the phrase was, his owner led him up to the *palenque*, tied him up firmly to it, and after hobbling and perhaps blindfolding him, saddled him, after a fierce struggle and an accompaniment of snorts. When all was ready, and the first light was just about to break, showing the Pampa silvery with mist and dew, and in the winter morning often presenting curious mirages of woods hung in the sky, the trees suspended upside down, the *capataz* would give the signal to set off. Going up gently to their horses, the Gauchos carefully untied them, taking good care no coil of the *maneador* should get caught in their feet, and then after tightening the broad hide girth, often eight or

nine inches broad, led them a little forward to let them get their backs down, or buck if they so felt inclined. Then they all mounted, some of the horses whirling round at a gallop, their riders holding their heads towards them by the *bozal* in the left hand, and with the reins and pommel of the saddle in the right. They mounted in a way peculiar to themselves, bending the knee and passing it over the middle of the saddle, but never dwelling on the stirrup, after the European way, so that the action seemed one motion, and they were on their horses as easily as a drop of water runs down a window-pane, and quite as noiselessly.

Calling the dogs, generally a troop of mongrels of all sorts, with perhaps a thin black greyhound or two amongst the pack, the Gauchos used to ride off silently, their horses leaving a trail of footsteps in the dew. Some bucked and plunged, their riders shouting as their long hair and *ponchos* flapped up and down at every bound the horses made. They left the *estancia* always at the *trotecito*, the horses putting up their backs, arching their necks and playing with the bit, whose inside rollers, known as *coscojo*, jingled on their teeth.

Then after a hundred yards or so one would look at the others and say "Vamos," the rest would answer "Vamonos" and set off galloping, until the *capataz* would order them to separate, telling them such and such a "point" of cattle should be about the hill which is above the river of the *sarandis*, there is a bald-faced cow in it, curly all over; you cannot miss her if you try. Other "points" would have a bullock with a broken horn in them, or some other animal, impossible to miss . . . to eyes trained to the plains.

In a moment all the horsemen disappeared into the "camp" just as the first rays of the sun came out to melt the dew upon the grass. This was called *campeando*, and the owner or the *capataz* usually made his aim some "point" of cattle which was the tamest and fed closest to the house, and probably contained all the tame oxen and a milk cow or two. When he had found them he drove them slowly to the *rodeo*, which they approached all bellowing, the younger animals striking into a run before they reached it, and all of them halting when they felt their feet on the bare ground. Once there, the *capataz*, lighting a cigarette, walked his horse slowly to and fro,

occasionally turning back any animal that tried to separate and go back to the grass.

Most likely he would wait an hour, or perhaps two, during which time the sun ascending gathered strength and brought out a keen, acrid smell from the hard-trodden earth of the *rodeo*, on which for years thousands of cattle had been driven up each day. The "point" of cattle already there would soon begin to hang their heads and stand quite motionless, the *capataz*' horse either become impatient or go off into a contemplative state, resting alternately on each hind leg.

Such of the dogs who had remained with him would stretch themselves at full length on the grass. At last faint shouts and sounds of galloping and baying dogs would be heard in the distance, gradually drawing near.

Then a dull thundering of countless feet, and by degrees, from north, south, east and west, would come great "points" of cattle, galloping. Behind, waving their *ponchos*, brandishing their short *rebenques* round their heads, raced the *vaqueros*, followed by the dogs. As each "point" reached the *rodeo* the galloping men would check their foaming horses so that the cattle might arrive at a slow pace and not cause

a stampede amongst the animals that were already on the spot.

At last all the "points" had arrived. Three, four, five or ten thousand cattle were assembled, and the men who had brought them from the thick cane-brakes and from the *montes* of the deltas of the streams, after having loosed their girths and lit cigarettes, proceeded slowly to ride round the herd to keep them on the spot. The dogs lay panting with their tongues lolling out of their mouths, the sun began to bite a little, and now and then a wild bullock or light-footed young cow, or even a small "point" of cattle, would break away, to try to get back to its *querencia*, or merely out of fright.

Then with a shout a horseman, starting with a bound, his horse all fire, his own long hair streaming out in the wind, would dart out after them, to try to head them back. "Vuelta ternero," "Vuelta vaquilla," they would cry, riding a little wide of the escaping beast. After a hundred yards or so, for the first rush of the wild native cattle was swift as lightning, the rider would close in. Riding in front of the escaping truant, he would try to turn it back, pressing his horse against its side.

If it turned, as was generally the case, towards the herd, after three or four hundred yards of chase, the Gaucho checked his horse and let the animal return at a slow gallop by itself till it had joined the rest.

If it was a fierce bullock or a fleet-footed cow, and even after he had bored it to one side it started out again, or stopped and charged, he rode beside it beating it with the handle of his *arreador*. When all these means had failed, as a last resource he sometimes ran his horse's chest against its flank, and gave it thus a heavy fall. This was called giving a *pechada*, and if repeated a few times usually cowed the wildest of the herd, though now and then an escaping animal had to be lassoed and dragged back, and then if it broke out again the Gauchos used to rope it, and after throwing it, dissect a bit of skin between the eyes, so that it fell and blinded the poor beast and stopped him running off. These were the humours of the scene, till after half an hour or so of gently riding round and round, the *rodeo*, from having been at first a bellowing, kaleidoscopic mass of horns and hoofs, of flashing eyes and tails lashing about, like snakes, a mere confusion of all colours, black, white and brown, dun, cream

and red, in an inextricable maze, became distinguishable, and you perceived the various "points," each recognizable by some outstanding beast, either in colour or in shape. The *capataz* and all the Gauchos knew them, just as a sailor knows all kinds of ships, and in an instant, with a quick look, could tell if such and such a beast was fat, or only in the state known to the adept as *carne blanca*, or if the general condition of the herd was good, and this with a *rodeo* of five thousand animals.

Their searching eyes detected at a glance if a beast had received a wound of any kind, if maggots had got into the sore, and sometimes on the spot the cow or bullock thus affected would be lassoed, cast, its wound washed out with salt and water, and then allowed to rise. Needless to say, this operation did not improve its temper, and as occasionally, in order to save trouble, the Gauchos did not rope it by the neck and put another rope on the hind legs, both horses straining on the ropes to keep them taut, but merely roped and cast and then put a fore leg above the horn, and let a man hold down the beast by pulling on its tail passed under the hind leg, the man who stood, holding the cow's

horn full of the "remedy," was left in a tight place.

If he had not an easy horse to mount, the infuriated beast sometimes pursued him with such quickness that he had to dive beneath the belly and mount from the offside. If by an evil chance his horse broke away from him to avoid the charge, two Gauchos rushing like the wind, their iron-handled whips raised in the air like flails, ready to fall upon the bullock's back, closed in upon the beast and fenced him in between their horses, at full speed, and as they passed, thundering upon the plain, men, horses and the flying animal all touching one another and straining every nerve, the man in peril, seizing the instant that they passed, sprang lightly up behind the near-side rider, just as a head of thistledown stops for a moment on the edge of a tall bank, tops it, and disappears.

When the *rodeo* had stood an hour or so, if nothing else was in the wind, the *vaqueros* galloped home slowly, smoking and talking of the price of cattle in the *saladeros*, the races to be held next Sunday at some *pulperia* or other, "La Flor de Mayo," "La Rosa del Sur," or "La Esquina de los pobres Diablos," and

the *rodeo*, when it felt itself alone, slowly disintegrated just as a crowd breaks up after a meeting in Hyde Park, and all the various "points" sought out their grazing grounds.

On days when they required fresh meat at the *estancia*, when it was necessary in Gaucho phrase to *carnear*, then the *capataz* and two *peones*, coiling their *lazos* as they went, rode into the *rodeo*, the cattle parting into lanes before them, and after much deliberation and pointing here and there, with sage remarks on the condition of the herd, he would point his finger at a beast. Then, cautiously, the two *vaqueros*, with the loop of their *lazo* trailing on the ground, taking good care to hold it in their right hands, high and wide, so that their horses did not tread in it, would close upon their prey. Watching him carefully, the horses turning almost before the men gave them the signal with the hand or heel, the cattle edging away from them, they would conduct the animal towards the edge of the *rodeo* with his head to the "camp."

When he was clear, with a shrill cry they spurred their horses and the doomed beast began to gallop, unless perchance he doubled back towards the herd, in which contingency

the operation had to be gone through again. Once galloping, the efforts of the riders were directed to keep him on the move, which in proportion to his wildness was harder or more easy to achieve, for a wild cow or bullock generally "parts" more easily than a tame animal. Perhaps the distance was a mile, and this they traversed at full gallop, hair, *poncho*, mane, and tail all flying in the wind, with a thin cloud of dust marking their passage as they went. When they got near the house one rider looked up at the other and said, "Now is the time to throw." In an instant, round his head revolved the thin hide-plaited rope, the ring (the last six feet in double plait) shining and glistening in the sun. The wrist turned like a well-oiled machine, the horse sprang forward with a bound, and the rope, winding like a snake, whistled and hurtled through the air.

It fixed as if by magic round the horns, the rider generally keeping in his hand some coils of slack for any casuality that might occur. The instant that it settled round the horns the rider spurred his horse away to the left side, for it was death to get entangled in the rope. In fact, in every cattle district maimed hands

and feet showed plainly how dangerous was the game. The check, called the *tirón*, came when the animal had galloped twenty yards or so. It brought him to a stop, his hind legs sliding to one side. The horse leaned over, straining on the rope, the victim bellowed and rolled its eyes, lashing its tail against its flanks and pawing up the turf.

If the position of the animal was near enough, so as to save the carriage of the meat, the last act straight began. If not, after avoiding dexterously a charge or two, keeping the rope taut, and free from his horse's legs or even sides or croup, unless he was a well-trained cattle horse, the other *peon* riding up behind, twisting his *lazo* round his head, urging his horse against the lassoed animal, rode up and drove him nearer in. Once within handy distance from the house, the man who had been driving threw his rope and caught the bullock by the heels. Sometimes they threw him down and butchered him; at other times, the man who had him by the horns, keeping his *lazo* taut, he and his horse throwing their weight upon the rope, called to his fellow to dismount and *carnear*.

If he was an expert, throwing his reins upon

the ground, he slipped off quickly, and crouching like a jaguar about to spring, ran cautiously to the offside of the enlassoed beast, drawing his long *facón*. Avoiding any desperate horn-thrust, like a cat avoids a stone, and taking care not to get mixed up with the rope, he plunged his knife deep down into the throat. The gushing stream of blood sprang like the water from a fire-plug, and the doomed creature sank upon its knees, then rocked a little to and fro, and with a bellow of distress, fell and expired.

If, on the other hand, the animal was fierce, or the man did not care to run the risk, he advanced, and, drawing his *facón* across its hocks, hamstrung it, and brought it to the ground, and then came up and killed it, when it was rendered helpless. On such occasions it was terrible, and quite enough to set a man against all beef for ever (had there been any other food upon the plains), to see the bullock jumping upon its mutilated legs and hear it bellow in its agony.

Last scene of all, the horses either unsaddled or attached to the *palenque*, or else to a stout post of the corral, the slayers, taking off their *ponchos* or their coats, skinned and cut up the beast. So rapidly was this achieved, that

sometimes hardly an hour had elapsed from the "death bellow," to the time when the raw joints of meat were hung in the *galpón*. The hide was stretched out in the sun, and the *chumangos* and the dogs feasted upon the entrails, whilst the wild riders, dusty and bloodstained, took a *maté* in the shade.

There was another and a wilder aspect of the *rodeo*, which, like a *pampero*, burst on the beholders so suddenly that when it passed and all had settled down again, they gazed, half stunned, out on the tranquil plain. It might be that a *tropero* was parting cattle for a *saladero*, his men cutting out cattle, riding them towards a "point" of working bullocks, held back by men about a quarter of a mile from the main body of the herd. All might be going well, the *rodeo* kept back by men riding round slowly. The parties might be working quietly, without much shouting; the day serene, the sun unclouded, when suddenly an uneasy movement would run through the cattle, making them sway and move about, after the fashion of the water in a whirlpool, without apparent cause.

If the *tropero* and the overseer or the owner of the place himself were men who knew the

"camp," and few of them were ignorant of all its lore, they did not lose a moment, but calling as gently as possible to the *peones*, they made them ride as close to one another as they could, in a great circle round about the beasts. It might be that their efforts would pacify the animals, but in all cases the "cutting out" was over for the day.

A little thing, a hat blown off, a *poncho* waving, a horse suddenly starting or falling in a hole, would render all their efforts useless and as vain as those of him who seeks to keep a flight of locusts from lighting on a field. In an instant the cattle would go mad, their eyes flash fire, their tails and heads go up, and, with a surge, the whole *rodeo*, perhaps five or six thousand beasts, would, with a universal bellow, and a noise as of a mighty river in full flood, break into a stampede. Nothing could stay their passage—over hills, down steep *quebradas*, and through streams they dashed, just as a prairie fire flies through the grass. Then was the time to see the Gaucho at his best; his hat blown back, held by a broad black ribbon underneath his chin, and as he flew along, slipping his *poncho* off, the *capataz* galloped to head the torrent of mad beasts.

The *peones*, spreading out like the sticks of a fan, urged on their horses with their great iron spurs, and with resounding blows of their *rebenques* as they strove hard to close and get in front. Those who were caught amongst the raging mass held their lives only by their horses' feet, pushed here and there against the animals, but still unmoved, upright and watchful in their saddles, and quick to seize the slightest opportunity of making their way out. If by mischance their horses fell, their fate was sealed; and the tornado past, their bodies lay upon the plain, like those of sailors washed ashore after a shipwreck—distorted, horrible.

The men who at the first had spread out on the sides, now closing in, had got in front, and galloped at the head of the mad torrent, waving their *ponchos* and brandishing their whips. They, too, were in great peril of their lives, if the herd crossed a viscachera or a *cangrejál*.* That was the time for prodigies of horsemanship. If I but close my eyes, I see, at a stampede on an *estancia* called "El Calá," a semi-Indian rushing down a slope to head the

* A viscachera was a place where viscachas burrowed. A *cangrejál* was a colony of land crabs. Both made very dangerous traps for riders.

cattle off. His horse was a dark dun, with eyes of fire, a black stripe down the middle of his back, and curious black markings on the hocks. His tail floated out in the wind, and helped him in his turnings, just as a steering oar deflects a whaleboat's prow. The brand was a small "s" inside a shield. I saw it as they passed. Down the steep slope they thundered, the Indian's hair rising and falling at each spring that the black dun made in his course. His great iron spurs hung off his heels, and all his silver gear, the reins, the *pasadores* of the stirrups, the *chapeao* and *fiadór*, and the great spurs themselves, jingled and clinked as he tore on to head the living maelstrom of the stampeding beasts. Suddenly his horse, although sure-footed, keen, and practised at the work, stepped in a hole and turned a somersault.

He fell, just as a stone from the nippers of a crane, and his wild rider, opening his legs, lit on his feet so truly, that his great iron spurs clanked on the ground like fetters, as he stood holding the halter in his hand. As his horse bounded to his feet, his rider, throwing down his head and tucking his left elbow well into his side, sprang at a bound upon his back and

galloped on, so rapidly that it appeared I had been dreaming, and only have woke up, thirty years after, to make sure of my dream. Sometimes the efforts of the *peones* were successful, and the first panic stayed, the cattle let themselves be broken into "points," and by degrees and with great management were driven back to the *rodeo* and kept there for an hour or two till they had quieted down. If, on the other hand, they kept on running, they ran for leagues, till they encountered a river or a lake, and plunging into it, many were drowned, and in all cases many were sure to stray and mix with other herds, or, wandering away, never returned again.

The whole impression of the scene was unforgettable, and through the dust, both of the prairie and the thicker dust of years, I can see still the surging of the living lava stream and hear its thunder on the plain.

UPWARDS

THE steep steps of the old church were thronged with peasants and with the dwellers in the Roman slums. The stair led upwards nearly as steeply as the legendary, perhaps, almost untrodden path that leads to heaven. Upon them a sort of semi-pious, semi-pagan fair was going on, and men and women cried their wares, cheap images of saints, scapularies and rosaries, their beads cut out of bone, with chains of leady-looking tin. A crucifix, stamped out by the hundred dozen in a mill, dangled from each of them. The symbol was the same as if it had been carved in ivory and every link of gold. No doubt, in their last hour to those who bought them the presentment of their Redeemer moulded in tin (or stamped) was as consoling to them as the finest work of the Renaissance. It also served them just as well when they swore falsely, with real tears in their eyes, calling upon the moulded figure to lift his hand and slay them if they were lying, as they

pressed it to their lips and lied. Withal they were a merry, handsome, loud-voiced crowd, and freely bought the sweetmeats and the flaky pastry which were on sale, together with the pious objects of their faith, out of the superfluity of their penury. The crowd pushed up the steps, the younger men halting to breathe and spit at every flight; the elder men and women toiling on, their eyes upon the ground, their hearts perhaps fixed upon heaven, at a slow plodding walk. Most of them wore a look of pleased, but not excited expectation, such as a man has on his face when he returns to some spot well remembered, that he has known for years.

The old, brown church looked down and seemed to welcome them, with the straw, leather-bound screen before the door, triced up like a lateen. Where the church rose a temple once had stood, and no doubt also seemed to welcome its crowd of worshippers, for both were heaven's altars in their own way. In fact, so little had the ritual changed inside the church that a pagan worshipper would hardly have felt out of place had he awaked after a sleep of centuries and mingled with the crowd. The skin-clad shepherds, with their wild locks and

shaggy beards, the bold-eyed women with their ample busts and wealth of coarse, black hair, would all have been familiar to him, and to complete the feeling of familiarity, a whiff of burned-out incense mingled with the scent of garlic floated from the church, just as it must have often floated from the temple of the gods. The thin and parchment-looking women, who generally sit outside the church, day in, day out, the whole year through, receiving alms with a certain condescension, for they know that without them the givers cannot attain to glory through their charity, had given up their posts as a bad job. Nothing blocked the entry to the church, and through the doors the crowd poured in, the men piously crossing themselves in the familiar, syncopated style of all men born in Catholic countries, the women stopping a moment after the pious movement to put a handkerchief upon their hair, following the injunction of S. Paul. The crowd passed in, joyous, but orderly, unwashed, yet bearing in every gesture the tradition of a culture that was old long before Britain was a name. Though women jostled against men, men against women, in the space between the door and the body of the church, no cry was heard, or any

giggling protest, such as is certain to be raised in other countries when people press against each other in the dark. Good manners, or the lack of imagination inherent in the race, kept them all within bounds; but yet their bounds were drawn so wide that in any other land they would not have restrained.

Inside, the darkness of the church was intensified by scaffolding, which had been up so long its colour hardly was to be distinguished from the stone. Young priests from all the seminaries in Rome were scattered here and there; their gowns and cassocks, red, green and blue, made blotches of dull colour as they passed to and fro. They moved about in knots, holding their cassocks up a little, just as a woman holds her skirts, for the floor of the church had been strewed with box-leaves, and the passage of the crowd had turned them into mud. There was a look upon their faces half interested, half critical, such as an actor wears in a strange theatre. Tombstones, each with a figure carved in high relief upon it, composed the pavement, which made it difficult to walk, and the strong scaffolding with which the aisle was filled cut it off into sections, something like loose boxes. Upon the baulks of timber boys

had climbed up to see the show, just as they do when a procession passes down a street. A crowd was gathered round a table by a great pillar in the aisle. On it stood children, girls and boys, who huddled close up to one another for mutual support, just as wild horses do in a corral. Some priests stood by, and a few women, each with an eye upon her child, regarding it with pride tinged with anxiety. Around the table the various seminarists had secured front places and stood expectant, their faces all suffused with mild excitement and with sympathy. The populace, although in general not used to giving place to anyone, but standing unmoved if right in the middle of a crowded street looking at drivers and remarking, "I am a Roman," instinctively had given way to the young priests, as if it recognized their claim. After some little urging, a boy about twelve years of age, dressed in his ordinary clothes, stood forward, and with a gesture, such as S. Paul made when he spoke to the men of Athens, calling for silence, took up his parable: "My brethren, the heart of Jesus always is open to the pure of spirit. Come to him. . . . Come, my brethren, and hear the words of innocence, I, though a child, speak to

you, for my heart is pure, the blessed words which, from the time when first the mysterious star stood fast over the stable in the East, and the three kings entered and knelt before the manger, where the Babe was laid . . . the Babe was laid"—he faltered for a moment, and a priest prompted him with "Courage, my son," and the child began again, just like a phonograph that has stuck for a minute—"the Babe was laid. The blessed word, the tidings of great joy, that we speak every year at this the blessed season of goodwill on earth and peace to all mankind. Therefore, my brethren, let us pray." Then he knelt down, crossing himself, and prayed for grace, and, rising to his feet, stretched out his arms in a fine, untaught gesture, and said: "Therefore, my brethren, after our prayer all that I say is, lay yourselves upon the Saviour's heart and listen to a child." His little sermon over, he stepped back amongst the other children, hot and triumphant, and a subdued but audible murmur of applause broke out from the young priests. One of them, a tall German youth, hung on the youthful preacher's words, with a far-off look of rhapsody upon his face, such as a peasant wears when in a church he sees the relics of a saint displayed.

He said, after a sigh, to a companion, "I often think that only children should be allowed to preach," a sentiment with which many who are not priests could well agree, if there were many preachers like the Italian boy.

After the boy, a tiny child was lifted up and bleated out that the Madonna never says "Go away, naughty children"; but always holds her arms out to them and calls them to her breast. When it was duly kissed and lifted down from its high perch, a girl stood up, in direct contradiction of S. Paul's dictum, and launched into a tale. Tall, slight, with a head of rippling dark brown hair, which gave a look to her as of a youthful Magdalen, she began, twisting her thin, brown hands about, a little tale of a Christian maiden of old times exposed to peril through the wickedness of a young Roman knight. In a high voice she told how Agatha prayed to the blessed Madonna in her peril, and how God's Holy Mother struck the wretch with blindness, which only was removed when, at the Christian maiden's exhortation, the wicked Roman was baptized. "Come, then, to the Madonna, our dear mother, she who has care of all us children, seeing in every one of us the image of her Son."

The child cast down her eyes, crossed herself, threw back her hair a little, and, turning, stood a moment for that admiration that she was well aware was due to her. The seminarists, though perhaps not so much edified as with the boy, were still human enough to look admiringly at the young, pious actress, and then they trooped away across the church towards the presentment of the manger, where ox and ass stood looking at the sleeping Babe, whilst the three kings laid gifts before his feet. Whether the piles of carrots, lettuces, potatoes, and of artichokes that were heaped up before the manger were the gifts of the three kings or those of pious members of the congregation was difficult to say. Still, there they were, giving an air of actuality that the plaster ox and ass, the figure of the shepherd with his gourd hanging from his waist, and all the other pious properties, a little took away. Progress, which had left untouched the sanitary condition of the little streets outside the church, had worked great changes on the presentment of the stable where was laid the Babe. The figures of the Madonna, of Joseph, and of the kings were all of stucco painted in gaudy colours, and evidently had come from France. Their

costumes had a kind of accuracy, giving them the effect of pious chromolithographs in books on Palestine.

Far different was the presentation of the manger a generation since. In those days, instead of a white glare from the electric light, three or four candles shed a murky gleam upon the scene. Joseph was dressed in mediæval clothes, the Blessed Virgin might have stepped from a canvas either of Carlo Dolci or Guercino; two of the Magi wore what their designer no doubt thought was Babylonian court dress; the third was painted blacker than the ace of spades, with an enormous turban and a scimitar. Progress had touched the manger in the Ara Cœli with its finger, making it up to date, more realistic and less natural; but the effect remained the same to the poor peasants and slum-dwellers who were looking on.

The spectacle, not being sentimental, held no attraction for the knots of seminarists who had pressed closely round the preaching children and stood enraptured at their words. They passed by, if not indifferent, yet half ashamed, one or two muttering, "These sort of things are of the nature of a kindergarten . . . fit for the poor and the uneducated." So may

a modernist regard with loathing a poor peasant kissing the brazen toe of the statue of S. Peter, quite unaware that the kiss and the man who kisses form the backbone of the Church which Peter founded, not on philosophy, but on blind faith, without foreseeing that in these latter days mountains would rise and block the path to heaven of the poor worshipper.

So round the chapel, with its glare of light and paper rocks, its stucco figures, and its ox and ass looking as if they had been borrowed from a child's Noah's ark, there was a throng of humble folk. Ragged old cloaks, so frayed and worn that the edges looked as if they had been fringed, covered up rags, and knotted horny hands that all their lives had toiled to produce all that made life worth living for, for others, leaned upon iron-shod staves. Girls with a dirty pocket-handkerchief balanced upon their heads stood gazing, just as a deer in a park stands gazing at a motor when it passes with a roar. Two soldiers, freshly caught, whose uniforms looked as if they had been made of cardboard, and in whose faces was the stare of wonder that they had brought from some lost village in the Apennines, stood and admired, talking in a strange dialect of the hills.

Children ran in and out among their elders' legs, and on the base of a great pillar sat an old peasant and his wife. Years and hard fare had turned their skins to parchment. No water had defiled their bodies since the day that they were born, and their patched clothes were indefinable in hue, with perhaps a shade of dusky brown giving a note of colour to them, as they sat looking like two bundles of dried vines. They gazed intensely with the air of seeing nothing that is so frequent in aged people who have passed hard lives, and the old man, letting his hand fall gently on his companion's knee, said, "Where is the infant Jesus; I cannot see Him for the bright light that they have put over the Blessed Virgin's head; but the ox and ass I see quite plainly looking down at the Babe." He saw the ox and ass; the crowd saw all the figures of the *presepio* just as they saw their daily lives, without the understanding of them. The youthful preachers and the manger, the knots of seminarists, the country folk, and the old couple sitting like Philemon and Baucis on the stone base of the great pillar, the church itself, and the religion that it taught, all seemed legitimate descendants of the old worshippers who once had worshipped in the temple that

had stood upon the place. Their joys and hopes and fears were of an older world, a world human, but outworn, lovable, and yet passing from our eyes, although we gazed upon it as the peasant gazed, striving to see the Babe.

Slowly the crowd dispersed, tramping out heavily in their nailed shoes, and leaving yet one or two women still looking at the chapel and carrying children in their arms. Over their heads floated two toy balloons, one red, one yellow, and with the children looking up at them as they floated in the air. They soared up heavenwards, and might have reached the sky had not the low roof of the church beaten them down again.

A MORAL VICTORY

My Aunt Alexia, whom I remember vividly, though she died more than forty years ago, was a type of the Yorkshire gentlewoman now long extinct. Short, and dark-haired, with eyes that seemed to be upon the point of starting from her head, she had a strong and wiry moustache, and when by chance she did not pull it out a growth of beard upon her chin, which used to make me shudder when as a boy she kissed me and they grated on the skin. I do not think this outward, visible sign of masculine interior forces gave her much trouble or annoyance, for she would say with pride, "My cousins the Fitzgibbons all have beards, both women and men alike." Family pride was a strong point with my good aunt, as she was nearly related to almost all the county families of Yorkshire, which interparentage a Scottish aunt of mine used to term scornfully in speaking of her, "Alexia and her fatiguing relatives." She always dressed in black, carried eternally

a bag embroidered with steel beads, and was a little deaf, but never used a trumpet, saying that nearly all her Yorkshire cousins were as deaf as she was, with considerable pride.

She was a Churchwoman, not because of any special partiality for the ritual of the Church, but because, born as she was a member of a county family, it would have been impossible for her to belong to any other faith. Ladies and gentlemen, as a rule, were Churchmen, unless they happened either to be eccentric in their tastes or Roman Catholics. The latter faith was, as it were, a visitation from on high which they had inherited from birth, in the same way as a hare-lip or a big purple blotch on one side of their face. To be eccentric was permissible if one was either born a Martin, or a Fitzgibbon, or any other of the hierarchy of the West Riding, such as a Mundell or a Milton-Rounde. A gamekeeper might be a dissenter, but not a coachman or a butler, for it was painful to sit behind a man who was not properly baptized, or to drink wine poured out by one who did not walk up the church on a Sunday as it were strewed with eggs.

My Aunt Alexia, either by reason of her

deafness or descent, had a hard temper, much like the disposition of an Airedale terrier; in fact, all her relations said that she was "varmint," a term which in their mouths was laudatory, for they applied it indifferently to dogs and horses, animals at least as sacred in their eyes as was the cat to the Egyptians, as well as to mankind. Still, she was kind-hearted, through brusque and masculine, and not without a vein of tenderness. As a child I stood in awe of her, partly on account of her exterior, partly because she was so deaf; but she had humour, a gift that always wins the confidence of children in a way older people seldom understand.

As fate would have it, this lady, a pattern of propriety and commonplace, with all the virtues and the failings of her class, her strong self-will and great austerity of face and bearing, had for a mate a man as different from her as the day is from the night, or, as she would have said, as chalk from cheese, in her old-fashioned speech.

Born in a military prison at Verdun, General Hickman Currie had grown up, not only speaking French, but quite a Frenchman in his ideas and ways. Short and well-made, he

must have been in youth what he called *un joli garçon;* but in the days when I remember him he was a wizened little man, alert and active, and with a chestnut wig that could have taken in nobody, and least of all a boy. Well over seventy, I remember him rolling his eyes and playing the guitar, as he sang love-songs in the Spanish tongue, which language he had acquired in youth, and spoke it volubly in the Gallic fashion, accentuating every syllable alike, so that it seemed a kind of gibberish more than a human speech.

His wigs were my delight, for he had three of them, and now and then, when he was staying at a country house, he would appear with one a little longer than the last, and after looking in the glass would say, "My hair has grown ridiculously long," and go off into town.

All his upbringing and his military life, for he had served with credit in several campaigns, were not much calculated to make him what is called "domesticated," and his chief object to the last day of his life was what he euphemistically styled gallantry, being, as he said, "equally at home with any one of them." How such a man, with all his graces and his

wigs, his songs to the guitar, his love of women, and his way of looking at the world, could have endeared himself to Aunt Alexia, always puzzled me. They seemed to pull together passably, for he, no matter what his practice may have been, always was outwardly discreet, and treated her with deference, and, though he made no secret of his tastes, never gave cause for scandal, and yet one felt that there was something not quite right between them, rather divined than seen. Their marriage had been one of inclination, for Aunt Alexia was by report in those days not ill-looking in an Amazonian fashion, and possibly less deaf. Money they neither of them had, though each had something, and of course the General had his pension, for in the days when I remember him he had long turned his sword into a walking-stick, and had become a pillar of the club in a small watering-place.

Nothing restrained the General from his universal love-making; but by the time that I remember him it had become rather an affair of making compliments and eyes than of what he called "pushing the attack." Still, the old spirit lingered in him, for at a picnic, when a lady had got into some difficulty, he turned to

me and told me to go to her assistance, and when I, boy-like, said she did not seem to need my help, rejoined, "A woman always is in want of help, my boy . . . especially on occasions when there is no need of it." My aunt looked upon his vagaries leniently enough in those days, though in the past they must have been of some annoyance to her, as I learned from another aunt of mine, whom report said the General had offended, either by making or not making love to her.

"My dear," said this good lady, "your Aunt Alexia has had a great deal to put up with from the General."

I could not help thinking that perhaps the General also had had something to put up with, but said nothing, knowing that if I did my aunt would not impart the information that was trembling on her tongue. "You see, my dear," she said, "your Aunt Alexia was one of those who understood when it was politic not to see everything." No one could possibly have accused my Aunt Margaret of not seeing everything. She was an Ogilvy, she used to say with pride, in the same way she might have stated she was vertebrate, and one of the mammalia, and certainly she could weigh a

person in the balance and find him wanting at a glance.

Aunt Margaret resumed: "Your Aunt and General Hickman, a person whom I never liked, for I could not abide his airs and graces, respected and possibly loved each other, for now that all is past see what a happy pair they are. Still, dear, your Aunt Alexia once was young, although to look at her to-day . . ." Aunt Margaret was a good seven years senior to my other aunt, and took snuff freely, drying her handkerchiefs before the fire after the operation, and at no epoch of her life could possibly have been attractive; but still remained a woman at the heart in matters that affected others of her sex. "You know it is galling for a woman to have her husband running after everyone, even if you have a moustache yourself, my dear." I agreed, and she resumed: "Your aunt always kept up appearances, and I think, in her secret heart, was rather proud of the General's reputation in the abstract; but yet, my dear, no one likes concrete things, no matter what they say. Your Uncle Arthur, although he said he was a Buddhist, swore fearfully when he had an attack of gout. So, dear, when any of her

friends—you know what fearful gossips your dear Aunt Charlotte and your Cousin Rachel are—used to come to your Aunt Alexia with tales about her husband, she always said they were all lies. Still, like a prudent woman, she did not talk too much. You recollect our Scottish proverb, 'Juke and let the jaw gae by'?"

I thought my aunt kept, so to speak, her finger on the trigger for an unconscionable time; but knew that once primed she would fire at last and hit the bull's-eye, so I merely nodded, saying, "What a memory you have for proverbs, Aunt Margaret! Better than Sancho Panza, I believe." "Ah yes, Sancho," she rejoined, and set about to gather up the disjointed fibres of her tale.

"Where had I got to? Oh yes, your Aunt Alexia always kept a stout heart to a stae brae, as the saying is, and never noticed many a thing that perhaps was not worth the noticing. Perhaps she never saw, and what the eyes do not see the heart does not grieve for, so it may be that she was wise enough. Deaf people are hard to understand. You never know what or when they hear; but seeing is a different thing, and your aunt had a vision like

a lynx. Well, well, the General was appointed to a command in India. In those days the passage round the Cape took ninety to a hundred days. All of a sudden he became so attentive to your aunt that everybody was surprised. He used to bring her flowers, and walk about with her just as he must have done before their honeymoon. Your Aunt Alexia never seemed at ease when, as she used to say, her husband was too French in his behaviour. Anyhow, the General said what could he do in India alone without his *chère petite Alexie*, and discoursed on the hardships of the voyage, for as the appointment was for a short time your aunt thought it was hardly worth her while to go so far afield. It was arranged that all good-byes were to be said at home. The General said he could not bear to see his wife standing upon the shore and waving a wet handkerchief . . . a woman with her pocket-handkerchief rolled up into a ball, red eyes, and hair flying in the wind . . . he used to say *decoiffée*, but always translated it and every other French word that he used, for your Aunt Alexia spoke no language but her own."

My aunt turned towards me, and, looking at my expectant face, said: "I am not sure if it is

altogether charitable to go on with my story, but it may serve you as a warning some day, so I will just go on." Aunt Margaret, being a Scotchwoman, had the saving gift of humour, so with a twinkle in her eye she went on with the story that she was bursting with desire to tell. "For several weeks—a voyage was a serious thing in those days—the General seemed to live down at the docks. He used to come back home to dinner worn out, as he said, with making proper preparations for his men. The soldier, he would say, lives through the stomach ; feed him and he will follow you through fire ; starve him and he will leave you in the lurch. Your Aunt Alexia, who I think had been captivated in the past by her husband's *bonhomie*, his easy manners, and his air of the complete man of the world, and who had always clung to him in spite of all his *fredaines*, as he called them, saying, 'Men will be men,' to which he answered, 'Yes, my life, and women women,' for he had no illusions as to woman's soulful love, now really began to respect him, as in her mind's eye she saw him labouring for the welfare of his men. As the time of sailing drew nearer day by day it seemed to Aunt Alexia as if she had been

acting meanly in letting her husband take the voyage all alone. Though it had been agreed she should not come down to the ship to spare the General's feelings and her own at parting, as the day of his departure drew near, whether she suspected anything or whether she thought she ought to go and see if he was comfortable on board, she took a sudden resolution and drove down to the docks upon the morning of the day before the vessel sailed. The steward met her at the gangway, and as he ushered her below remarked 'We was on the look-out for you, Mum; the General's had the cabin done up beautiful, and only half an hour ago he sent a barrowful of flowers.'" What my aunt thought no one but she herself could possibly have told; however, she was *varmint*, and made no sign, and quietly followed the steward down below.

The first glance round the cabin must have shown her how the land lay, for evidently the General did not contemplate a solitary voyage. Fresh chintz and flowers with plate and pictures gave the cabin an air as of a yacht, and two sea-cots standing beside each other, an air of domesticity unusual in the cabin of a transport in those far-distant days.

My aunt looked round as if she had expected everything just as she found it, said, "It is all very nice, though the fresh paint and varnish is a little overpowering. . . . Send me a cup of tea." The plan of her campaign must have sprung to her brain at once intuitively, as to the brain of a consummate general in the field, for, taking off her bonnet and her wrap, she wrote a letter, which she sent back by the cab. After an hour or two the cab returned bringing her boxes, which she instantly unpacked. In the afternoon the General came down, whistling a little air, to see that all was right before he went off home to take a tearful farewell of his wife. What passed between them when they found themselves together in the cabin none ever knew but the two principals, and they never divulged a word.

Later in the afternoon another cab arrived piled high with luggage, but a mysterious note handed in by the steward caused it to turn about and return silently to town. Early next morning the vessel put to sea, and as my aunt was a bad sailor, perhaps the General had an easier time for the first week than by all rights he had deserved. As the mysterious lady who was to have occupied the cot in which my aunt

reposed had never shown herself aboard, matters remained in a vague condition of conjecture, and my Aunt Margaret when she told the story always declared that she thought Aunt Alexia most probably never let her husband really know that she suspected anything was wrong. How she explained her unexpected presence in the ship Aunt Margaret had no idea, but she opined there must have been some awkward moments at the captain's table when conversation flagged, and when their cabin door was closed, and they retired to rest.

BISMILLAH

A FLOCK of goats lay on the rocky hill, their parti-coloured backs looking like stones amongst the scrub of lentisk and low palm. The noon-day sun had made them drowsy, even the whirring of a dragon-fly as it passed like a humming-bird, barely made them raise their heads. Below the hill spread out the bay, blue, calm, and looking almost artificial, or as if drawn by an indifferent painter, it was so conventional, with its white waves breaking upon a pebbly beach in a long, soothing swish. At one end of the bay rose the white town, surrounded by a ruined wall. The houses mounted up the hill in steps, flat-topped, and painted a pale pink or a metallic blue. One or two slender towers and a few palm-trees stood up here and there. No smoke defiled the atmosphere, and thus the town looked empty and unreal. So might Pompeii have appeared had it been left deserted and not overwhelmed. About the middle of the bay

two or three fishing-boats lay becalmed, their high lateens sticking up straight, just as the bar of an old Arab draw-well, with its tall arm and heavy stone tied to its butt with an esparto rope, sticks up on a brown plain. A long white line, fleecy and sparkling in the sun, showed where a tide-rip crossed the straits, although so still was everything it might have been but painted by the inferior draftsman that had drawn the sea. The other arm of land that formed the bay was high and rocky, and was crowned by an old watch-tower standing on a cliff. Villages, shown by their cactus hedges, which cut them into squares like a vast chess-board, with here and there a round white dome that marked a saint's house springing up like a mushroom in a field, were almost indistinguishable from the scrub.

Sea, land, and hills, the patches of dark bush, the grove of fig-trees round the crumbling fort, in which the cannon all lay prone beside their carriages . . . the end of war is peace . . . were bathed in a white light, which cast black shadows on the sand. All was so quiet that you could almost hear the growth of plants, and the faint, twittering notes of the goatherd's pipe, cut from a

green cane, seemed to fill all the air. A little sandy river ran beneath the fort.

Some ragged cattle, and thin mares with their feet hobbled with a palmetto cord, stood about listlessly. A knot of camels grazed on the sparse and wiry grass. Storks chattered on the thatched roofs of the village by the salt-pans, and the remains of an old Roman port still stood up stoutly after ten centuries of pillage and decay. All was so peaceful and so primitive that if Theocritus had come to life again, he could not but have taken up his pen to write another idyll, to prove the golden age had never passed away.

All round the hillock, upon which, amongst palmetto bushes and the rocks, the goats were lying, ran like a lake a tract of sandy ground, white with the efflorescence of the salt that flowed out from the pans. On it the grass grew sparely, and little flowers, pink and procumbent, appeared between its stalks. The guardian of the flock lay with his head under a clump of dwarfish palm, his two brown legs, tanned with the sun that he had fought with all his life and that his ancestors brought in their blood from the far Yemen or the Hejáz, looked like the roots of the thick bushes that

the sand had left uncovered at his feet. His dark and liquid eyes were not unlike those of the goats he herded, and as he played upon his pipe a strange wild air, the intervals so wild and so uncertain that a bird might have been deceived by it and flown about him, thinking that one of its own kind was in distress, a little kid, white but for a spot or two about its nose, nestled up to his side. Now and again he patted it, and the two seemed but a little separated from one another, in nature or degree.

As the day wore on the goats slowly began to rise and feed; the boy got up, leaving a little hollow in the sand where he had lain by the palmettos, and, drawing out his sling, lazily sent a stone or two whistling towards the goats. As the stones struck the ground near to the animals they drew their feet together in a bunch, jumped to one side, and then, after stretching out into a long line, dispersed about the stones to graze. A flight of cranes, looking like aerial camels, passed overhead, their shrill, harsh cries lost in the stillness of the air. Nature awoke after its midday torpor, and in the valley the lean Arab mares, dragging their hobbled feet slowly along or rising in a sort of stifled rear, turned their heads towards the

breeze as they began to feed. Their foals, that had lain looking as if half dead, rose to their feet, and, shaking off the sand, whinnied and trotted after them, their stilt-like legs giving them an air of those strange animals drawn by the cave-dwellers upon the rocks.

Slowly the little river filled. Stones on the sandy flat were covered as if by magic by the incoming tide, so imperceptibly that you could no more mark the rising of the flood than follow the slow movement of the hands of a cathedral clock as they eat time before your eyes. The droning of the insects ceased, save for the sharp metallic chirp of crickets, and caravans of asses and of mules that had arrived too late to pass the river were turned back to the grass to feed or struck a winding path between high bushes to seek another ford. As the goats fed, the small, white kid followed the little goatherd like a dog, stopping to eat, then trotted up to him to rub its nose against his legs. He took its innocent caresses just as a man acknowledges those of his dog, as if they were his due; but at the same time something he prides himself upon as testifying to his worth. All day the goats fed happily amongst the stones or browsed upon the

thorns. Sometimes they ran along the trunk of a fallen tree like tight-rope dancers, to reach its branches, or bounding on a rock, stood for an instant motionless, and leaping down again, began again to feed, with just the air that a man wears upon his face after some sudden foolish action into which he is betrayed.

By slow degrees the sun began to slant, gilding the mosque towers in the town across the bay, painting the sails of fishing-boats and throwing ever-lengthening shadows on the sand. The massive walls of the deserted Roman port turned to a dullish yellow in its rays, and the far-off mountains above Tetuán seemed to draw nearer as the light haze raised by the heat was slowly dissipated. As the sun sank, tribesmen returning from the town, all dressed in white as if they had been shrouded for their own burial, came trooping homewards, crossing the river seated on their mules. One would go forward with his white garments tucked up, sounding the water with a stick. Then came the caravan, some mounted, some on foot, the women passing with their garments held up round their necks, but with their faces all veiled chastely, for, as the Arabs say, the devil enters at the mouth.

The mules' and ponies' feet, in the swift, running walk that they affect, seemed not to leave the ground, and yet the riders, rocked by the motion, swayed in their seats just as a man does on a camel, as it slides through the sand. They brushed through beds of the palmettos making a noise as of the opening of a fan. Passing the little plain, in the midst of which stood the steep hillock where the goats had lain amongst the stones, they disappeared down the rough path that crossed a stream, and reappeared upon the bush-clad hill, looking like a flock of sheep in their white clothes, then faded out of sight.

Sometimes, instead of these white friar-like figures, a knot of men from the far highlands, dressed in their short brown cloaks, their scarlet flannel gun-cases wound turban-like about their heads, passed at a swinging trot. They bore their rifles in their hands and danced along like fauns, occasionally firing a shot or two or simulating a hill-fight, whirling their guns about and uttering wild cries. As they passed on their way, either on foot or mounted, the little flock of goats, with that pathetic trust in man that Eastern animals seem to have above all others of their kind, scarcely avoided them,

and now and then a pony's tail seemed to be whisked to brush the flies off, it passed so near their heads.

Their little shepherd stood playing on his reed or plaiting a palmetto cord, his two brown feet, with their prehensile toes holding the ground just as a monkey's paws curve around a rope. At last all the returning village folk had gone, the sun sank lower, and the boy, gathering his flocks together, walked towards home in front of them piping on his reed.

In a long line they followed, the kids occasionally stopping to browse upon the cytisus and the lentiscus bushes. The milk-white kid followed the closest at his heels. The little river, from which the tide had now retired, was almost empty, and the flock passed it with the water scarcely up to their knees. They threaded through the open gateway of the old Roman port, passed by the salt-pans and drew near to an Arab village, built of reeds and thatched with thistle stalks, giving the huts the look as of the nest of some gigantic bird. Upon a little plot of grass outside the village sat several elders, men of grave mien, bearded and formal in their manners, who by their appearance should have been discoursing on religion, the

unity of God or on his attributes; but who were probably talking about the price of grain. An air of peace, such as one fancies reigned on earth when Boaz courted Ruth, hung over everything. Girls lingered at the well and talked, and then, their slender water-jars filled up, and with a tuft of tender canes or reeds floating on the top, went homeward, stepping like deer upon their naked feet and swaying with their load. Bells tinkled on the kine, and now and then a homing stork circled about the huts and dropped into its nest.

Over the straits was stealing by degrees a greenish light that made the hills in Spain still more intensely vivid, flushed as they were with red. The fishing-boats began to look mysterious as the day faded, and the town to stand out white and unnatural-looking, like a dead city in the moon. As the flock and its shepherd reached the village one of the grave and bearded men arose. He stopped the boy, and speaking to him in sonorous Arabic said something, and the boy, reaching out a lean brown hand, caught the white kid and held it for a moment. The village elder felt its neck, and then drawing out a knife, after a pious "In the name of God," rapidly cut its throat. The kid uttered a little cry, and

from its neck the blood spirted out in a stream upon the grass. One little jet fell on the boy's brown foot, and as he watched the last contortions of the dying kid with interest, but without feeling for his playmate's loss, dried in the warm sea breeze and looked as if a vein had been exposed.

Slowly the kid's head sank and coggled limply, and with a heaving motion of its flanks its life was finished. Mystery of mysteries! Still the same air of peace hung over everything, and as the flock passed to its pen the call to prayer was wafted up to heaven from the village mosque, fitful and quavering.

MIST IN MENTEITH

SOME say the name Menteith meant a peat moss in Gaelic, and certainly peat mosses fill a third of the whole vale. However that may be, its chiefest attribute is mist. Shadows in summer play on the faces of the hills, and snow in winter spreads a cold carpet over the brown moss; but the mist stays the longest with us, and under it the semi-Highland, semi-Lowland valley puts on its most familiar air.

When billowing waves wreathe round the hills, and by degrees encroach upon the low, flat moors, they shroud the district from the world, as if they wished to keep it from all prying eyes, safe and inviolate. Summer and spring and winter all have their charms, either when the faint green of the baulked vegetation of the north breaks out, tender yet vivid, or when the bees buzz in the heather in the long days of the short, nightless summer, or when the streams run noiselessly under their shroud of ice in a hard frost. The autumn brings the

rain, soaking and blurring everything. Leaves blotch and blacken, then fall swirling down on to the sodden earth.

On trees and stones, from fences, from the feals upon the tops of dykes, a beady moisture oozes, making them look as if they had been frosted. When all is ready for them, the mists sweep down and cover everything; from the interior of the darkness comes the cries of wild ducks, of herons as they sit upon the trees, and of geese passing overhead. Inside the wreaths of mist another world seems to have come into existence, something distinct from and antagonistic to mankind. When the mist once descends, blotting out the familiar features of the landscape, leaving perhaps the Rock of Stirling floating in the air, the three black trees upon the bare rock of the Fairy Hill growing from nothing, or the peak of the Cobbler, seeming to peer above enormous mountain ranges, though in reality nothing more vast than the long shoulder of Ben Lomond intervenes, the change has come that gives Menteith its special character.

There are mists all the world over, and in Scotland in particular; mists circling round the Western Islands, filling the glens and boiling

in the corries of the hills mists that creep out to sea or in towards the land from seawards, threatening and dreadful-looking; but none like ours, so impalpable and strange, and yet so fitting to our low, flat mosses with our encircling hills. In older days they sheltered the marauders from the north, who in their gloom fell on the valley as if they had sprung from the night, plundered and burned and harried, and then retreated under cover of the mist, back to their fastnesses.

As they came through the Glen of Glenny, or the old road behind Ben Dhu, which comes out just a little east of Invertrossachs, when the wind blew aside the sheltering wreaths of steam, and the rare gleams of sun fell on the shaggy band, striking upon the heads of their Lochaber axes, and again shifted and covered them from sight, they must have seemed a phantom army, seen in a dream, just between consciousness and sleep.

The lake, with its three islands, its giant chestnuts, now stag-headed and about to fall, the mouldering priory, the long church with its built-up, five-light window, the castle, overgrown with brushwood, and with a tree springing up from the middle hall, the heronry, the

rope of sand the fairies twisted, which would have made a causeway to the island had they not stopped just in the nick of time, the single tree that marks the gallows, and the old churchyard of the Port, all these the mist invests with a peculiar charm that they lack when the sun shines and shows them merely mouldering ruins and decaying trees.

So of the Flanders Moss. It, too, in mist seems to roll on for miles; its heathy surface turns to long waves that play against the foot of the low range of hills, and beat upon Craigforth as if it were an island in the sea. Through wreaths of steam, the sullen Forth winds in and out between the peat hags, and when a slant of wind leaves it clear for an instant it looks mysterious and dark, as might a stream of quick-silver running down from a mine. When a fish leaps, the sound re-echoes like a bell, as it falls back into the water, and rings spread out till they are lost beneath the banks.

After a day or two of gloom life begins somehow or another to be charged with mystery; and, walking through the woods, instinctively you look about half in alarm as a roe bounds away, or from a fir-tree

a capercailzie drums or flies off with a noise as if a moose was bursting through the trees.

Peat smoke floats through the air from cottages a mile away, acrid and penetrating, and fills the nostrils with its scent. The little streams run with a muffled tinkle as if they wished to hide away from sight; rank, yellow ragweeds on their banks, bowed down with the thick moisture, all hang their heads as if they mourned for the lost sunshine and the day. Now and then leaves flutter down slowly to the ground like dying butterflies. Over the whole earth hangs, as it were, a sounding-board, intensifying everything, making the senses more acute, and carrying voices from a distance, focussed to the ear.

So through our mists, a shepherd's dog barking a mile off, is heard as loudly as if it were a yard or two away, although the sound comes slowly to the hearing, as when old-fashioned guns hung fire and the report appeared to reach one through a veil. Thus does the past, with its wild legends, the raiders from the north, the Broken Men, the Saxon's Leap, the battles of the Grahams and the McGregors, come down to us veiled by the mist of time.

In the lone churchyards, whose grass is always damp the whole year round, whose earth, when a new grave is dug, is always wet, so wet that not a stone rolls from it to the grass; the tombstones, with the lettering overgrown with lichens, only preserve the names of the old enemies who now lie side by side, in a faint shadowy way. The sword that marks the resting-place of the men of the most turbulent of all the races of that borderland is usually only the shadow of a sword, so well the mist has done its work, rounding off edges and obliterating chisel marks.

Boats on the Loch o' the Port, with oars muffled by the cloud of vapour that broods upon the lake, glide in and out of the thick curtain spread between the earth and sky, the figure of the standing fisher in the stern looming gigantic as he wields his rod in vain; for, in the calm, even the water-spiders leave a ripple as they run. In the low, mossy "parks" that lose themselves in beds of bulrushes before they join the lake, the Highland cattle stand at gaze, the damp congealing on their coats in whitish beadlets, and horses hang their heads disconsolately, for no matter in what climate they are born, horses are creatures of the sun.

Under the shroud of gloom it seems that something strange is going on, something impalpable that gives the valley of Menteith its own peculiar air of sadness, as if no summer sun, no winter frost, no fierce March winds, or the chill cold of April, could ever really dry the tears of moisture that it lays up under the autumn mist. So all our walls are decked with a thick coating of grey lichen on the weather side that looks like flakes of leather, and on the lee side with a covering of bright, green moss.

Thatch moulders, and from it springs a growth of vegetation; a perpetual dripping from the eaves opens a little rill below it, in which the pebbles glisten as in a mountain stream.

Along the roads the scanty traffic rumbles fitfully, and on the Sabbath, down the steep path towards the little church, knots of fantastic figures seem to stalk like threatening phantoms. When they draw near, one sees that they were but the familiar faces of McKerrochar of Cullamoon, Graham of Tombreak, Campbell of Rinaclach, and Finlay Mitchell, dressed in their Sunday clothes. They pass the time of day, daunder a little in the damp kirkyard, so

heaped with graves they have to pick their way between them just as sheep pick their way and follow one another on a steep mountain path, or when they cross a burn.

Although their talk runs on their daily life—the price of beasts at the last market or the tryst, upon bad seasons and the crops, all in the compassed and depreciatory vein characteristic of their calling and their race, they once have been fantastic figures towering above the dry-stone dykes that edge the road. That glory nothing can take away from them, or from the valley where they dwell.

Nothing is stable. Snows melt and rain gives place to sun, and sun to rain again; spring melts into summer, then autumn blends insensibly with winter, and the year is out. Men come and go, the Saxon speech replaces Gaelic; even traditions insensibly are lost.

The trees decay and fall, then they lie prone like the great hollow chestnut trunks, blackened by tourists' fires, in Inchmahome. Our hills and valleys all have changed their shapes under the action either of fire or ice. Life, faiths, ideals, all have changed. The Flanders Moss that was a sea is now crossed by a railway and by innumerable roads. What, then, shall we,

who have seen mists rising up all our lives, feared them as children, loved them in riper years, cling to, but mist?

Refuge of our wild ancestors, moulder of character, inspirer of the love of mystery, chief characteristic of the Keltic mind, spirit that watches over hills and valleys, lochs, clachans, bealachs and shaggy baadans, essence compounded of the water of the sky and earth, impalpable, dark and threatening, Fingal and Bran and Ossian, and he who in outstretching Ardnamurchan strung his harp to bless the birlinn of Clanranald, all have disappeared in thy grey folds.

Whether thou art death stealing amongst us, veiled, or life concealed behind a curtain, or but an emanation from the ground, which the poor student, studying in Aberdeen, working by day upon the wharves and poring over books at night, can explain as easily as he can solve all other mysteries, with his science primer, who shall say?

All that I know is that when the mantle of the damp rolls down upon us, battling with the rough oak copse upon Ben Dearch or Craigmore till all is swallowed up and a smooth surface stretches out over what, but half an

hour before, was a thick wood of gnarled and secular trees that stood like piles stand up in an embankment, eaten by the sea, the mist has conquered.

Somehow, I think, its victory brings a sense of rest.

THE PASS OF THE RIVER

THE river spread out broad, but swift and deep, just underneath the little town, which stood upon a sandy bank, the whitewashed, flat-roofed houses, appearing from the far side of the pass, buried in gardens and in trees. To the east, the river's banks were buried in a forest of *ñandubay*, of *coronillo* and *chañár*. In the great bend it formed, the *monte* grew so thickly that when you penetrated it in search of horses, or to put up strayed cattle, to the *rodeo*, it seemed you were in another world from that of the open grassy prairies, only a league away.

Paths ran about between the thickets, passing round clumps of cactus, and avoiding pools. The scent came from the blossoms of the *espinillo de olor*, and from the *arasá*, filling the nostrils with a perfume almost of the tropics; the creeping plants in places bound the thickets in a net of living cordage—impenetrable, mysterious, and as if nature had set a challenge

to mankind, saying, "Thus far . . . but there are secrets that you shall not solve."

Birds, as the little black-and-white *viudita*, with its forked, twitching tail; the plump, metallic-looking, purple-winged *jacú*; the francolin, and half a hundred others, flashed across the path. From overhanging boughs the nests of the hornero hung. Humming-birds poised themselves, brighter than jacinths, more iridescent than the beryl, as they sucked the honey from the great trumpet-shaped and dark-red, fleshy cactus flowers. Closer to the river, cormorants sat meditating on bald boughs, and in the stream aigrettes and herons fished, whilst gorgeous kingfishers flitted across the surface of the water and disappeared into the sedge.

Mares, with long, ropy manes, stood feeding in the clearings: then bounded back into the bush with a sharp snort at the first sight of man. Domestic cattle that had gone wild, bellowed and pawed the ground as you passed on your way, as if they somehow, in some mysterious way, remembered that their ancestors had one day been as free as were the forest deer—shyest of all the animals in the River Plate.

Such was the river on the east.

Towards the north, a line of stony hills, not high, but steep, extended towards the frontiers of Brazil. The grass was wiry, and the stones seemed to have been strewn by accident; between them sprung up tufts of thorny bush.

The hills ended about a league or two from the river-bank, leaving a space of open prairie to the west, which gradually shelved down towards the Pass.

Tracks, like those that the Arabs make all through the desert, made their appearance several hundred yards before the last descent; tracks not made by wheels, for nothing but the weekly diligence and a rare bullock cart or two ever passed on the road. Horses and mules and cattle, flocks of sheep and still more horses, mules and cattle and more flocks of sheep, were what had made the tracks; and yet the prairie was so wide, the carpet of long grass so strong, that almost all tracks ceased when once the trail had come out on the plain. From the last little rise, one saw the river, yellowish green, and swirling quietly in its channel, making smooth whirlpools here and there. It ran so silently, that it looked like oil, and now

and then small landslips, either of sand or mud, fell with a splash into the stream that undermined the banks. Occasionally a fish sprang from the water and then fell back with a loud crash, and now and then a water tortoise raised its head. The pass itself spread out about a quarter of a mile in width, and on the land side to the west stood several straw ranches and a white flat-topped *pulperia*, known as the "Twenty-Fifth of May."

A row of posts for hitching horses were driven deep into the ground before the door, and at them all the day stood horses blinking in the sun. The *cojinillos* of the saddles were doubled forward over the pommel to keep the seat cool in hot weather or dry in rain. The reins were tied back to the cantle of the saddle to prevent them falling down and being stepped upon. Sometimes a man, emerging from the *pulperia*, with a gin bottle in his hand, or a bag of *yerba*, placed them in his saddle-bags, and carefully undoing his hide halter, girthed up his horse, putting his foot against its side, then, mounting, struck into the road towards the "camp" at a fox-trot, which after a hundred yards or so he changed to the slow gallop of the plains, his right arm moving rhythmically

up and down as he allowed his whip to dangle on his horse's flanks to keep him to his pace.

Some of the horses at the hitching posts were saddled with old *recaos* covered with sheep-skins, and others blazed with silver, and now and then a wild-eyed *redomon* sat back and snorted when an incautious stranger came too near.

Occasionally three or four men came out together, some of them half drunk; but in an instant all had mounted lightly, and so to speak took wing, just like a flight of birds. No diving for their stirrups, and no snatching at the reins, no sticking out the body in an undignified position as they got up, and no resounding whack of the leg on the off-side of the horse, after the European style, ever occurred amongst these centaurs as they rode slowly off. Occasionally a man who had drunk too freely of *Carlón* or of *Cachaza*, and topped up with some gin, swayed in his saddle, but his horse seemed to catch him as he swayed, so perfect was his balance, and so firm his grasp between the thighs.

A stout stockade of posts of *ñandubay* set touching one another was thrown about the house, leaving the entrance narrow enough to

close with a long pole, a precaution which at times was not unneeded, when some Gaucho tried to ride into the court.

The actual door led into a low room in which a counter ran from wall to wall, surmounted by a railing of light wood, in which a little trap was cut; through it the owner passed the drinks, the boxes of sardines, the packages of raisins or of figs, which constituted his chief articles of trade.

Outside the counter lounged the customers, for in those days the *pulperia* was a sort of unofficial club to which the idlers of the district all resorted, to while away their time. The clank of spurs sounded like fetters on the hard mud floor, and night and day a cracked guitar, with either every string fashioned of wire, or else the catgut mended up with strips of hide, twangled eternally. The *payador*,* if so be that there was one present, took it of right, and after tuning up—an operation which generally took some time—played silently for a few bars, usually only a few simple chords, and then struck into a wild song, sung in a high falsetto, prolonging all the vowels and finishing upon the highest note he could attain.

* Improvisatore.

These songs almost invariably dealt with love, and were of the most melancholy complexion, according strangely with the fierce look and wild appearance of the singer and the grim faces of the listeners.

Occasionally a man would rise, and coming to the window in the railing say "Carlón," and would receive the dark red, heady Catalonian wine in a tin mug that held about a pint, and pass it round to all the loungers, beginning always with the *payador*.

In North America, upon the prairies in similar circumstances, you kicked the counter and said "How," with perhaps the addition of "Boys, here's the hair off your heads"; but at the *pulperia* upon the Yi the etiquette was to take the mug and murmur "Gracias," or if you were a man of parts some pretty phrase or other, for though all men the whole world over are the slaves of etiquette, in different lands, it takes a different form, just as one star differs from another in brightness and in size.

Men would come in, and, after salutations, drink silently and go, touching their hats, and others instantly plunge into a conversation about the almost certain revolution or any other topic of the "camp," just as men do in clubs,

where some make friends and others pass their lives hedged in behind their collars, speaking to nobody. Occasionally a fight would come about after a quarrel, and sometimes two known *valientes* would challenge one another to fight until first blood, the loser to pay a pint of wine or something of the kind.

That was the time for elaborate preparations. Spurs would be taken off and given to the *pulpero* and *ponchos* rolled about the arm. Then some authority would instruct the combatants where the knives should be held, leaving an inch, two inches, or the half blade beyond the hand, and the two heroes would begin. These contests were more formal than when they fought in earnest, and body blows were barred. Usually, after springing to and fro like cats, parrying, passing and crouching low, catching the blows upon their arms defended by their summer *ponchos*, they would pause for breath, whilst the assistants criticized the strokes. As all the cuts were levelled either at the arm or face, the contest sometimes lasted five or six minutes, and when at last the blood was drawn the beaten man, calling for wine, handed it courteously to his opponent, who passed it back to him, with many compli-

ments. This was the summer weather, so to speak, of *pulperia* life, but now and then a sudden fury, after a bout of drink or any cause, would make some man get up vociferating like a maniac and drawing his *facón*.

Such a sight I remember once, not at the *pulperia* on the Yi, but near Bahia Blanca, where a grim old man, his long grey hair hanging a foot or more upon his shoulders, suddenly bounded on the floor, and drawing his long knife, beat furiously upon the counter and the walls, yelling out, "Viva Rosas, mueran los unitarios Salvajes," and foaming at the mouth. He looked so terrible that most of those assembled either drew their arms, or sliding out like cats to the *palenque* took the hobbles off their horses, and stood waiting by their sides. The *pulpero* hurriedly drew down his window, then taking his revolver in his left hand, carefully placed some empty bottles in a row upon the counter, ready to throw upon the crowd. After a minute, which, I confess, seemed longer than an hour, and after having menaced everyone with death unless they cried out "Viva Rosas," the old man's knife fell from his hand upon the ground, and he himself, tottering towards a seat, sat silent, rocking himself to and fro, and

mumbling in his beard. The Gauchos sheathed their knives, and one of them muttered, "He is thinking of the deaths he owed when he was young. Leave him in peace."

The owner of the *pulperia* on the Yi was one Eduardo Peña, a sort of cross between a Gaucho and a townsman, wearing a coat and waistcoat, but no shirt collar, and with his loose *bombachas* tucked into high riding-boots with patent leather tops, worked with an eagle in red thread. Tall and athletic, the lump inside his coat by his right elbow showed where his pistol was, and everybody knew in politics he was a Blanco, although he generally kept his opinions pretty quiet, being, as he said, "a kind of a guitar for all to play upon."

No one had ever seen him with a good horse to ride, which he explained by saying he was half a sailor, being the owner of the *balsa* on the Pass.

The *balsa*, a flying bridge, worked by men pulling on a rope, which was swept across the river by the action of the stream, gave Eduardo Peña a position of importance midway between the dignity of an *estanciero* and of a merchant in the town.

Although there was a ford in average weather,

three or four hundred yards above the flying bridge, few used it, as it was deep and dangerous, the bottom full of holes, and after several hours of rain became impassable.

Lounging about the river's edges stood the *balseros*, generally Correntinos, an amphibious race of men, as much at home in a canoe as on a horse's back, tall, slight, and Indian-looking, talking a curious dialect of Spanish, all mixed with Guarani.

A colony of little huts, some made of straw and others out of old tin cans, was set about a hundred yards from the water-side. In them lived several *chinas*, who drove a thriving trade in love amongst the passers-by. One or two of them, such as "Boton de Oro" and "Molinillo de Cafe," and in especial a half-Indian girl known as "La Laucha," almost deserve a place in history, considering the time they lived about the place and their resisting powers.

All of them on occasions were ready with their knives, and it would have been a bold man indeed who tried to better them at playing *monte* or *la taba*, or any of the games, so called of chance, played by the *habitués* of the Pass.

As all the whole world over extremes meet,

it was curious to see how the old customs of the Greeks were to be seen in the straw *ranchos* near the *balsa* on the Yi. If any of the *chinas* were employed on what for want of a more explicit term we may refer to as *l'ouvrage de dames*, she dropped the mare's hide which served as door, and no one troubled her, just as in Hellas ladies of the same profession were wont to close their doors. All the night long the tinkling of guitars came from the *ranchos*, and usually by day the occupants slept and recuperated until the evening, when they came out and sat at the receipt of custom, and hence the name of *Las Murciélagas*, by which they all were known. Although the river ran within a hundred yards of their straw *ranchos*, no one had ever seen one of these "bats" bathe or do anything but draw a can of water from its stream. Had they been asked, it is not improbable that they had answered, "Only Indians bathe. We are Christians and clean," or something of the kind. So does the pride of race blind people to their welfare, and take away all of our senses, including that of smell. Day in, day out, horses and cattle waited at the Pass, their owners hailing the *balsa*, which was safe to be upon the other side, and sitting,

with one leg crossed on the pommel of the saddle, smoking their cigarettes.

A fine green dust, composed of every kind of animal manure, filled all the air upon fine days, and as there were no trees within a quarter of a mile, the heat was tropical, and the few sheds which stood about for shelter from the sun, sure to be occupied.

The cattle hung their heads as if they had been on *rodeo*, and the peons, placed upon the bank for fear of a stampede, slumbered upon their saddles, though with one eye always half open for the first sign of movement in the herd. Sometimes a troop of mules, wild and unbroken, going to Brazil, gave more excitement, for the first sight of the great *balsa* arriving at the bank was sure to frighten them, when in a moment, in a cloud of dust, they disappeared into the camp, the negro peons from Rio Grande rushing to head them back. Sometimes the owner or his *capataz*, a dark Brazilian riding a horse covered with silver trappings, his saddle kept in place by a crupper—a most unusual thing amongst the Gauchos of the plains—wearing a sword stuck through his girths, and with a pair of silver-mounted pistols at his saddle-bow, by dint of galloping was able

to head the troop into a swamp or angle of the river, or against some wood, and gradually get them calmed down and manageable. All generally went well as long as the frightened animals could be kept all together, but if they separated and cut out into "points," days might elapse before the troop again was got up to the Pass. As mules that once had been stampeded were always liable to stampede again, the utmost care was needed to make them by degrees, and twenty at a time, enter the *balsa* and allow themselves to be transported to the other side.

Occasionally all efforts were in vain. Then came the time for Don Eduardo Peña and his men. Two Correntinos in canoes, one up the stream and one below, lay on their paddles ready to keep the swimming animals from getting washed away. Gently, and with infinite precaution, they were conducted to the ford, and when at last they all were huddled on the bank and stood there terrified, the mounted men closed in upon them with a shout. Forcing their horses up against the mules, they yelled, and swung their *lazos* and their whips. At last some mule, bolder or more experienced than the rest, would stretch its ears out towards the

water and take a cautious step. Then was the time for noise to cease, for mules are twenty times more self-reliant than are horses, and it was ten to one if the first mule should enter, the rest would follow him.

If the first mule took his decision and began to swim, others soon followed, and by degrees the troop would take the water, their heads sticking out straight like camels, and a faint line of back appearing as they swam.

In their canoes the Correntinos splashed water with their paddles to keep the animals together, and when the whole were swimming, paddled beside them to prevent them turning back. The Brazilian negroes crossed, swimming on their horses, and the *capataz*, when he had seen them land and gather up the mules into a bunch, rode slowly to the *balsa*, and forcing in his horse by dint of spurring was taken over dry.

Sometimes he too had his adventures, as one who, I remember, riding a half-tamed horse, had it jump with him on its back over the railing of the *balsa* in the middle of the stream. Swearing in Portuguese, and spouting water like a whale, he clambered back again, but, like a perfect Gaucho as he was, still holding fast the reins. His horse swam after him, and the

fierce current carried it sideways till it lay helpless, when it was towed along.

His *cojinillo* was turned back, showing a pair of *boleadores* which he had placed across the saddle underneath the seat. Little by little the current washed them off, amidst the laughter of the people on the raft. Just as they seemed about to disappear, a Gaucho, sitting on his horse, threw himself sideways, and, hanging by his heel, caught them upon the end of his *facón*.

The discomfited Brazilian, both his hands occupied in keeping up his horse's head, murmured a "*muito obrigado*," amid the laughter of the crowd.

All day the *balsa* journeyed to and fro, and Don Eduardo Peña lounged about, smoking and taking his receipts, varying his occupation by an occasional visit to his *pulperia*, to take a vermouth or a *vino seco* with a friend.

All day the stream of life, going northward to Brazil and south towards the capital, was focussed at the Pass.

Horsemen as still as statues waited for their turn, the only sign they were alive being when their horses shook their heads, making the *coscojo* of the bit rattle against their teeth.

Horsemen came up at a slow *trotecito*, their horses playing with the bit, the riders' hands holding the reins as lightly as they had been silk threads, and other riders came up with a succession of wild snorts and bounds, their half-wild horses shying from the *balsa*, and only entering it after a stubborn fight. Great herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, long trains of bullock carts loaded with wool, and, once a week, the diligence, drawn by six horses, with a boy riding a seventh fastened by a *lazo* from the cinch to a great iron hook upon the pole, passed with a rattle of glass windows, in a dense cloud of dust.

Such were the humours of the Pass, focus and brief epitome of Gaucho life in Uruguay.

Now without doubt a hideous iron bridge stretches across the Yi. Trains pass and rumble, and out of them lean passengers who look out at the Pass, which once was the chief interest of all life between Durazno and San Fructuoso, in a perfunctory way, then ring the bell and ask how long a time they have to wait before the dinner hour.

ANASTASIO LUCENA

We lay so near the shore in a steam tug that we could hear the noises of the city, and see the lights that looked so close it seemed that you could touch them by stretching out your hand. The watchmen called each hour, informing us that the night was serene, after having hailed the Blessed Virgin in a long-drawn-out wail.

Though we had lain there for three days in quarantine, none of us could sleep, partly on account of the mosquitoes and partly from the uneasy pitching of the tug-boat in the muddy current of the River Plate.

Three of us whiled away the time by fishing and by telling stories, the travellers' resource at such times, as we sat and smoked. Our budget was exhausted, and after having sat a long time silent in the sweltering heat, Mansel said suddenly: "I have told you all my yarns, but I can recollect a thing, there is no story in it, that left a strong impression on my mind."

We looked towards him gratefully as he sat cutting tobacco on his riding boot, with a long silver-handled knife. Tall, dark, and nervous, with round, prominent eyes, a sparse moustache, a skin tanned by the sun to a brick-dark red, his thick, brown hair cut short like a French soldier's, or, as he called it, "all the same dog's back," although he wore the loose black merino trousers worn by all "camp-men" in those days, shoved into patent leather riding-boots, and slept, as we said, in his spurs, you saw he once had been a sailor, at the first glance. The sea leaves marks upon its votaries that even time never entirely rubs out, perhaps because, being an element so hostile to mankind, the difficulty of accustoming oneself to all its moods alters a man for life.

Rough-tongued and irascible, he was one of those who in their dictionaries had never come upon the verb "to fear."

He slowly rolled his cigarette and sheathed his silver-handled knife behind his back, leaving the haft just sticking out below his elbow on the right side. After expelling through his mouth and nostrils a sort of solfatara of blue smoke, he said: "Yes, call my yarn a memory, a recollection . . . for it is not a story, only

a circumstance that I remember vividly, just as one never can forget an object seen in a flash of lightning . . . perhaps the word should be . . ." One of us interjected "An Impression"; he nodded and began his tale :—

"Night caught me, miles from a house, on a tired horse, and with a storm of wind and rain, such as you only see upon the plains. At first I galloped, hoping to arrive at some place where I could pass the night under a roof, and then as the darkness thickened, my horse, impervious to the spur, slackened down to a jog, which in these parts they call a *trotecito*. An hour or so of stumbling through the darkness, broken occasionally by lightning that seemed to run along the ground, of being suddenly brought up against a stream which seemed impossible to pass, and having to ride up banks to find a crossing, and the jog-trot became a walk.

"No matter how I spurred, nothing could move my horse; but just as I was thinking that I should have to pass the night out in the 'camp,' I thought I heard the distant barking of a dog. My horse had heard it too, and, turning him towards the sound, I felt him quicken up again to a slow, shuffling trot. It seemed

I rode for hours, until at last the barking grew more furious, and in the distance a feeble light gleamed rather than shone, just like a vessel's mast-head light at sea. I brushed through some tall thistles, and by dint of whip and spur drove my horse, now so tired he could scarcely drag himself along, towards the barking of the dogs.

"At last my horse emerged out of the long, rough grass that clothes the southern Pampas, on to the open space before a house. Though it was dark I felt the difference at once, and the soft rustling of the wild grasses that sounds at night almost as if you rode through water ceased, and I began to hear my horse's foot-fall on the hard-trodden ground. The folded sheep were bleating in the *chiquero*, and when I turned towards it, I divined rather than saw the piles of cut, dried thorns, ranged in a circle, after the fashion that one sees amongst the Arabs, forming the corral, from which an acrid smell, rising from all the fleeces closely packed together, floated on the night air.

"Advancing still a little further, I saw the house, a mud and wattle *rancho*, with its low thatched roof. Through the interstices of the walls came the reflection of the fire, which

burned right in the middle of the floor. It seemed as if at last, after long years of battling with the storm, that I had reached a haven of some sort. The *rancho* stood forlorn upon the open space. No tree, no shrub, no garden, or any patch of cultivated ground cut it off from the plain, that seemed to flow right up to it on every side.

"A dried and crumpled mare's hide formed the door. As the wind beat on it and got in between it and the jambs, it surged about, reminding me of a boat heaving at a wharf. Right opposite the door, and twenty yards or so away, stood a hitching post of *ñandubay*, at which to fasten horses, and spurring up to it, I called out, 'Ave Maria purissima,' and received the answer, 'Sin Pecado Concebida.' A man seemed to rise from the darkness by my side, and saying in a gentle voice, 'Welcome, get off and let your horse loose, he is too tired to stray,' called off the pack of barking dogs and led me by the hand into the house. The mare's hide swung to behind us stiffly, blotting out the night, and the bright glare from the blazing hearth was almost blinding to my eyes, fresh from the storm and rain. Sit, down upon one of those bullocks' heads,'

said my entertainer, 'your horse cannot go far, and if he is too tired to travel in the morning I will give you one of mine.'

"He spoke, and as he stood before the fire that burned on the low hearth, erect and sinewy, with his long mane of jet-black hair, a little flecked with grey, falling down on his shoulders, I saw that he was blind. His eyes appeared quite perfect, but evidently saw nothing, and as he moved about the *rancho* he now and then touched with his shoulder or his head some of the horse gear that hung from pegs upon the walls. He must have somehow felt I saw his great calamity—for out upon the plains what cross could possibly be heavier to bear?—for he said, 'Yes, I am blind. The visitation came from God, only three years ago. It crept upon me by degrees, no one knows how, although a doctor in the town said it was paralysis of the optic nerve; not that I cared much what he said, for when a man is blind it comes from God, like death or any other ill.'

"He paused and motioned with his hand towards me, just as if he saw, towards the bullocks' heads, and when I squatted down, he too took his seat on one of them. 'Take off

your boots,' he said, 'and dry yourself, and throw some wood upon the fire—it is there in the corner; my son, he who sleeps there on his *recado*, took care to pile up plenty, for I smelt the coming of the storm.'

"I had not seen the boy, who now turned on his elbow and looked up. His father went on: 'He is tired, for at this moment we are alone here in the *rancho;* my wife and family have gone to town, and he has had to be on horseback all the day, from the time when the false dawn streaks the sky, till sundown, doing all the work.' As I piled the wood upon the fire my host looked towards me and said, 'How tall you are!' And when I asked him how he knew, said, 'The voice comes from the rafters, as it were. We blind think much on things that in our seeing days we took no notice of.'

"The storm still raged outside, and as my things dried before the fire of bones and *ñandubay*, that feeling of contentment that comfort brings with it after exposure to the weather for long hours, stole over me. The boy upon his saddle had turned his face away from the glowing embers, and the hut felt like a ship at sea; and I, a passenger under the guidance of a pilot who was blind, felt myself listening to

his talk, as if he were a friend of years, as happens in the plains when men meet casually, just as it happens with the other animals. A horse puts out its head and snuffles, and his fellow instantly becomes his friend, or at least he is not actively his enemy, and the same thing occurs with men.

"Under the directions of my host, I put a side of mutton down to roast, skewering it upon an iron spit, which he said I should find stuck in the thatch. The roast crackled and sputtered, and the rich juices fell into the fire and made it fiercer, and as it roasted slowly, we passed round the *maté*, I having put the kettle and the bag of *yerba* into the blind man's hand. Practice had made it just as easy for him to pour the water into the hole cut in the gourd as it is for a man who wears a sword to sheathe it in the dark. So after having filled the gourd, and taking a long pull of it to see that it was working properly, he passed it to me, and I sucked the hot, bitter mixture with the avidity of a man who has been storm-tossed and has not eaten since the early dawn.

"My host had not the unnatural curiosity of a defenceless man upon a frontier to know if

there was any recent movement amongst the Indians, for his fate would not have been uncertain if at any time—even upon the night we sat and talked—a raiding party of the Tchehuelches or the Pampas had happened to pass by. 'Our lives,' he said, 'are in God's hand,' a truism which it was hard to controvert, though at the same time, situated as we were, the intervention of a good and speedy horse might have assisted fate. Still, when he listened now and then, and held the *maté* half-way to his lips, and gave that strained attention that makes the attitude of listening in blind men seem, as it were, to indicate some extra sense in them, I watched him with some trepidation till he said: 'It is nothing, only a stallion rounding up his mares. Each night,' he said, 'I saddle up a horse and leave him tied under a shed behind the house, and if I could but get my hand upon his mane I might yet lead the Indians a dance.' He felt my look of wonder, and rejoined: 'I should ride keeping the wind upon my cheek, and as the night is dark, I and the Indians would be on an equality. In fact, I think that if there were any advantage, it would be upon my side, for I know all the "camps" for leagues on every

side, so well, that I can cross them easily, even though I am blind.'

"I looked at him, and thought what a fine figure he would look wrapped in a double darkness, with his hair flying in the wind, and his eyes open, but unseeing, as he galloped through the night. When the roast was ready, I took the horn in which was kept the salt and water, from a peg and sprinkled it, and then, with a courteous gesture, my host pointed towards the meat, and we fell to, cutting great junks off with our knives and holding one end in our teeth, cut them down to our lips. We talked about the usual topics of the 'camp,' the marks of horses, Indian incursions, the accursed ways of government, the locusts, and the things that in such countries replace the reports of parliaments and police-courts, and all the villainies of city life.

"Then we lay down upon our saddles, after the tall, blind Gaucho, whose name I learned was Anastasio Lucena, had said the rosary.

"Morning broke fine and clear, with a slight film of frost upon the grass. In the *chiquero* the sheep were bleating to be let out, and cattle on the hills got up and stretched themselves, looking like camels as they stood with their

heads high and their hind-quarters drooping to the ground. A distant wood behind a little hill was hung suspended in the sky, with the trees growing towards the earth by an effect of mirage, and from the world there came a smell of freshness and a sensation of new birth. My horse was not in a fit state to travel, and when the boy had driven the *tropilla* up to the corral, Anastasio Lucena unsaddled and let loose the horse he always kept tied up at night for fear of Indians, which rolled and neighed and then galloped off to seek its fellows in the 'camp.' We stood in the corral, and, as I swung the *lazo* round my head two or three times to see it had no kinks, I said to Anastasio, 'Which of the horses may I catch?'

"He looked towards them just as if he saw them perfectly, and answered, 'Anyone you like except the little *doradillo*. He is my wife's and she will soon be back again from town, where she has gone to buy the children clothes.'

"As the *tropilla* galloped round the corral I marked a cream-coloured with a black tail and mane, and threw the *lazo*, which uncoiled just like a snake and settled round his neck.

'Which have you caught?' asked Anastasio; and I answered, 'The black-cream-colour.' He smiled and said: 'A little quick to mount, but a good horse—well, let him loose to-night just after dark, when you get to the Estancia de la Cascada, a short ten leagues away, and by the morning he will be back at home. Your horse I will have collared to the mare, and you can send for him in a week or so, when he is rested and fit again for work.'

"I saddled up, thanked Anastasio Lucena for his hospitality, who answered that he was my servant, and that his house was mine whenever I might pass. Then mounting, not without difficulty, for the black-cream-colour was quick as lightning in the turns he made the instant that you raised your foot towards the stirrup, and started with a rush. After the first bound or two was over and the horse settled to a steady lope, I turned and looked back towards the *rancho* where I had passed the night. Upon the threshold stood its owner, tall and erect; his long black hair just flecked with grey, falling down on his shoulders, reminded me somehow of pictures of Christ that I had seen. His head was turned towards the sound of the black-cream-colour's hoofs, and

his eyes, open but sightless, seemed to take in the Pampa with its indomitable space."

Mansel stopped, passed his own hand across his eyes as if they pained him with the intensity of the impression they had received long years ago, and then, as if he were talking to himself, said:

"Adios, Anastasio Lucena—or perhaps I ought to say 'so long.' Perhaps he has now taken the long *galopito* on which his want of sight was not a hindrance to him, or perhaps he now sees better than we do ourselves. *Quien sabe?* Anyhow, he has come back to me to-night, and I am glad to thank him once more for his hospitality, and his good cream-colour with the black tail and mane."

A PAGE OF PLINY

My friend McFarlane lived in a curious old house, far from the world. When you had driven up the long, neglected avenues, you felt that you could pass your life there happily, just as some kind of sailors must have felt when they had been marooned upon a lonely island lost in the South Seas. He and his wife, a studious woman, but yet with an adventurous strain, lived quietly as was befitting to their narrow circumstances, due to the fall in agricultural values, which in those days had just begun.

Tall, thin, and freckled, McFarlane had no Scottish accent in his speech, only that faint and whining intonation which reminds one of the wind running out of the chanter of a bagpipe after a Lament. "I would like to tell you," he once said, "of my one excursus into mining — that is, if when you have heard the tale you think it worthy of the name." I had known miners up and down the world;

had seen them in the Sierra Madre, in Arizona, at the Real de Famatima, in Spain, in Portugal, and in Africa, and knew they all imagined that they held Golconda at the sharp end of their picks, if they were poor, and that their mine was the best in the whole world if they were rich.

So I pricked up my ears, and said, "Go on, let's hear about it." McFarlane, after he had lighted up his pipe, slowly began to talk.

"In my old house there were two upright bookcases in the recesses of the long, low Adams' room, with its four pillars, its double fireplaces, its five great windows, and its look-out on the steep terraces and rushy parks, in which grew islands of sycamores and limes, with here and there a wind-swept birch, whose roots, laid bare by winter rains, were honey-combed with rabbit-holes. Beyond the belts of planting, between which ran the public road, was a round hill planted with beech-trees, and further on, or rather flowing up against its side, as if it were a sea, a billowing, brown moss.

"Time sometimes hung a little heavy on my hands in the long spells of rain which visited that portion of the world . . . although you know," my friend observed, after the fashion

of so many of his countrymen, "our climate is no worse than that of England, after all.

"The damp exuded from the walls and furniture all 'bloomed' . . . that was the word the housemaids used to use . . . showing a kind of bluish moisture, and grates turned red with rust. At such times, far from a town, and when old favourites had been read, reread, and put away, one set about exploring one of those books that all men have upon their bookshelves, which they have never read, and yet know the outside, the binding, and the lettering on the backs so well that they have but to shut their eyes to see them in their own particular place in some old room, although the books themselves have long been sold, and perhaps now lie blistering in the sun upon a tray outside a shop . . . they that in times gone by were dusted once a week, and cared for almost as if they were alive.

"Such a book there was, in folio, which always stood upon a lower shelf between Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* and Gerarde's *Herbal.*

"Parkinson stood a little further on, with Sir James Hope's *Scottish Fencing Master*, *The Parfait Mareschal*, and a tall Montaigne, which

had been bought in Paris from a lead box upon the quays.

"Andrade's *Arte da Cavalheiria*, and Garcilasso de la Vegas' *History of Peru*, a folio Bible (seldom read), Douglas's *Peerage*, and Nisbet's *Heraldry*, almost made up the shelf.

"The book in question (two volumes folio) was bound in sheepskin, with the name on the back done with a thick quill pen, a rose below the lettering as an ornament, and a small piece of sheepskin gone from near the top of Volume II, leaving the threads that bound the leaves together exposed to daylight, an accident which, like the sticking of the curtain at a theatre, always seems to let you peer, as it were indelicately, into the secrets of a life which, to be held at its true value, should be inviolate.

"The hand-drawn lettering set forth in Spanish that the two bulky volumes were the works of Pliny. Inside, upon the title-page, it appeared that in addition to the *Natural History* were commentaries by Fray Geronimo de Huerta, Familiar of the Holy Office of the Inquisition. These commentaries were in the way of additions, and contained facts that the heathen writer did not know, as they had happened after his decease.

"Books like the Spanish Pliny are not to be embarked upon without consideration, so I, the owner of it, after unfastening the little loops of catgut into which fitted two small shells as buttons, looked at the title-page and saw that the Holy Office had approved and certified the work.

"In addition, the Rector of Salamanca of that day, the King's confessor, and several reverend Churchmen had read the book and had approved it, finding, as they said, 'that although written by a heathen, it contained nothing subversive of morality, or anything which we find ourselves forced to condemn, so that it may go forth and be sold here in the Court, and generally throughout the Spains, the Indies, and in the other realms of his most gracious Majesty the King.'

"Four or five prefaces and forewords from various scholar-clerics introduced one by degrees to Pliny's work; but slowly and as if the writers only stopped because had they gone on they would have written the whole book. In a spell of bad weather no book could possibly be more appropriate than was the Pliny with its two portly tomes.

"Long had I swithered, as we say beyond

the Tweed, about the matter, being well aware that, in any case, probably it was not only the first step that counted, but that the second and each succeeding one would be as heavy as the last. Long did I dally with the first volume, reading the various prefaces and the 'censuras,' and wondering how anyone could possibly have piled so many words on one another without at last being forced to say something or other, if only by mistake.

"Then looking at the introduction, and being struck, as always is the case when I now look at the old book and smile at the adventure which grew out of my first attempt at reading it, by the fact that Pliny was a gentleman, I turned the leaves over in the perfunctory way that one is apt to fall into upon a rainy day. I remember too, how, given the state of natural history of the time, it struck me that the knowledge Pliny had about the various birds and beasts, plants, planets, stones, and minerals that he describes, was accuracy itself compared to the additions of the Spanish monk, who thought that he was bringing Pliny up to date, with his dull commentaries.

"I soon got tired of reading it, and made it over to my wife. She read and annotated,

after her custom, and in a day or two asked me if I remembered hearing of a Roman gold mine in Galicia, upon a journey we had made.

"The thing had slipped my memory, though when she spoke of it I thought I had heard something of the sort, in a vague kind of way.

"So she took up the Spanish Pliny and read me out a passage, in which the writer talked of a gold mine in Lusitania, which, of course, in his days comprised Galicia. Then I remembered how the country people used to go down to the sands upon the River Sil and wash for gold, and an infinity of stories we had heard, near Carraceido, a little village by a lake, not very far from Villa Franca in the Vierzo, a most neglected part of Spain, twenty or thirty years ago.

"Well, well, my wife in half a moment had perceived the connection, intimate and quite complete, between the page of Pliny and the tales the Spanish peasantry had told us on the River Sil." He said this, proud of his clever wife, not that for a single moment he appeared to have been deceived by her quick jump to the end of the long chain and her omission of the links. These he saw clearly were all wanting; but yet he knew his wife's perception

and quick intuition were superior to his own, and he was Scotch enough to know when he was outclassed, although no doubt in the realm of things that can be acquired he thought himself omniscient after the fashion of his race.

So he resumed, half smiling, and yet pleased both with himself and her. "Nothing would content my wife but that I should go at once and find the gold mine, which she was certain by the system that she had of mental triangulation would be there waiting for me.

"She said, not without reason, I confess, that nobody in Spain had ever heard of Pliny but as a troublesome historian about whom boys were bothered when at school, and that although throughout the district, which she remembered now was called the Val de Orras, traditions lingered, no one had thought of making a survey. I, who knew Spain as well as she did, thought there was something in her arguments, but still was unconvinced about the mine.

"Yet, there is something in the confidence of one you live with that, if it does not at once impel belief, still keeps your mind upon the stretch. In the evening, several days later,

when we were sitting in the long drawing-room, which on the one side of the house was flush with the carriage-drive, and on the other raised ten or twelve feet above the terraces, the petroleum lamps casting dark shadows, for we had done away with our gasometer (my father's joy) as not being artistic, and sat in semi-darkness, blowing the half-green logs of wood that seethed and spluttered in the grate, we fell a-talking of the passage that my wife had found.

"Man," said my friend, with one of those half lapses into the vernacular that Scotchmen use amongst themselves when they wish either to disarm criticism or capture sympathy, "it may have been the loneliness of the old house, the moonlight streaming in at one of the five windows—neither myself nor yet my wife ever drew blinds or curtains—or maybe it was that by the firelight a proposition seems more convincing than in the light of day . . . at least, I think so.

"All that I do know is that we agreed that evening that I should go and find the place where Pliny said the Romans drew much of their gold in Spain.

"We laughed, I mind it well, although it

was so many years ago, and my wife had not a single silver thread in that bonny head of hair of hers, as black as a crow's wing."

"Time flies," and as he spoke he looked into the glass above the mantelpiece, as if he wished to mark its hand upon himself; and then, as one who, after gazing in a crystal ball, sees a sad vision in it, sighed and took up his tale.

"How well I see us sitting by the fire in our old lonely house that evening, with all our dogs about us. When we had once got the thing settled in our minds, the next step was to get a mining engineer, for I knew nothing about mines, though I had lived in places in Mexico where mysterious strangers used to come up to you, and, after looking round to see that no one had their eye upon them, produce a dirty packet from the recesses of their rags, and after taking off a dozen bits of paper, show you a piece of dull red-looking rock, and say that it was '*plata piña*,' the richest specimen known to the world, and that for a consideration they would impart its whereabouts and make you a rich man. They never would explain, when they had a treasure such as they swore they knew of, why they were always in such poverty,

so I concluded they were all philanthropists and did not care for gold.

"My wife knew of an engineer, one Thomas Garnard, whom she had met in some forgotten place in Spain. As he lived in Madrid, and fortune had not smiled upon him, he seemed the very man.

"He wrote and said that he would meet me at Orense, for with the care that people quite inexperienced in business always take in matters such as these, we had not informed him, but in vague terms, of our projected search.

"I confess when I found myself on board the steamer bound for Vigo, with a treatise upon placer-mining in my bag, I felt inclined to laugh.

"I read the mining treatise, and made little of it, and then took out my pocket-book and conned the passage we had copied out of Pliny, and found it vaguer in the full light of day than it had seemed at home in the dark Georgian room. However, there was nothing to be done, and in a twinkling, as it seemed, the vessel passed the narrow channel between the islands that guard Vigo harbour, and ran into the bay. Little by little she opened up the

town clustering upon its hill, and dominated by the two fangless castles, looking like blind lions, impotent, but awful to behold.

"The great black rock of the Cabrón, the long and winding channel up to the Lazaretto, I saw just for a moment, as the vessel turned and steamed up to her anchorage, and then the Monte de la Guia, crowned with its hermitage, seemed to project and shut them out of view. I went ashore, almost, as we say, in a dwawm, and heard mechanically the boys who always cluster round a foreigner, all screaming out, 'I say.' Nothing had altered. The Guardias Civiles stood in their glazed three-cornered hats and their green worsted gloves, impassive, motionless, and looking like the law embodified. No one could possibly have ever been so law-respecting as they looked. The bullock-carts, with their high wicker sides and solid wheels, looking like Roman carts upon a coin of Hadrian, still creaked along, although, as I was told, the new Alcalde contemplated putting out an order that the axles should be greased. Still, as of yore, some horses played upon the green beside the sea, although a nasty, little public garden, with young magnolias, dusty oleanders, a stuccoed fish-pond and a fountain

with a boy struggling with a goose, so much distorted that the boy looked like an abortion in a jar, and the goose seemed like a bladder full of lard, had filched a portion of the ground. The usual dollar passed me through the custom-house, and sitting down upon a plaster bench in the new garden, I observed with pleasure that the wreck of the three-masted schooner, which I knew had lain just at high-water mark upon the shore for the last twenty years, was still almost intact, although some of her copper had been torn away, leaving a rent upon her side. Gone was the Alameda, with its tall elm-trees, and in its place a walk the natives called El Bulevar, with a tin kiosk, where newspapers should have been sold had there been anyone to buy them, and on its paths a man or two wandered about discontentedly, carrying those tall tin cylinders with a small roulette board upon the top, selling the wafers known as *barquillas*, the joy of nurserymaids and their attendant swains in every Spanish town.

"These signs of want of progress gave me courage, for I argued, if here in Vigo, in this place, which after all is a provincial capital, things never seem to change, how much less

likely is there to be change out in the district where the mine was situated. So after breakfast, which, though the waiter told me that it would be ready shortly after twelve, was only served at half-past one, I took the train for Orense, where I had arranged to meet my mining engineer.

"The line followed the harbour, running by Redondela and breaking off through some wild moors, past oak woods, maize fields, vineyards, and little brown-roofed towns; now passing mountain Calvaries, with their stone crosses overgrown with lichen, and then by streams upon whose banks women were washing in the sun.

"We passed by Rivadavia, which lay sweltering in the heat, and towards evening, in a cloud of dust, slowly steamed into Orense, with the rough jolting on the ill-closed points, well known on Spanish trains. A grateful coolness was just setting in as I drove rattling and jingling through the streets, passing the lofty bridge, one of the wonders of the place. The proverb says, 'Three things Orense has, the like of which are not in Spain. Its Bridge, its Christ, and its three Boiling Springs, the Burgas'; and it is true enough.

"The heat was tropical, and the inhabitants all were sitting at their doors, exhausted by their battle with the sun, to catch the evening breeze.

"Men sat on chairs, tilted against the walls, with their shirt collars loosened, and women leaned from windows, pale and exhausted, while in the shade lay panting yellow dogs, snapping occasionally at flies as they buzzed round their jaws. I reached the inn begrimed with perspiration and with dust, and as I did so I was greeted by a man, who grasped my hand and welcomed me to Orense, which he remarked was just as hot as Lima or as the hob of hell. I guessed that he was Garnard, and in a moment he had introduced himself, shoving a limp and dirty card into my hand. On it I read, in faintish lettering, the legend, 'Tomas Garnard,' and an address in Lima, which had had a pen drawn through it, and 'Horno de la Mata, 17 Madrid,' inserted in its stead.

"When I had read it carefully and handed him my own, we went into the inn, dined and then talked, until the small hours of the night, about the Roman mine.

"Don Tomas Garnard was a man to whom

life was a fairy tale. Nothing astonished him if it was only wild enough; but on the other hand the merely credible did not appeal to him, and he subjected it to strict examination, finding it, as a general rule, impossible, and not worthy of belief.

"He had met my wife at an hotel in Lima . . . I mean Madrid, he added . . . and talked with her about the district where we now found ourselves, and she had told him of the legends she had heard amongst the peasantry. He knew no Latin, except the names of minerals, but when I read the passage I had copied out at home he became fired at once, though I confess, each time I read the words, they seemed less definite.

"Next morning saw us in the diligence, on a hot morning, one of the hottest I remember in my life, jolting towards the Val de Orras, but luckily seated beside the driver in what is known as the *pescante*, a kind of hood, from which he kept up a perpetual fire of oaths and blows and cigarettes, lighting a fresh one from the last one smoked, all through the livelong day. His assistant, an active-looking lad, got down occasionally, even although the coach was going at full speed, and taking out a handful of

well-chosen pebbles from his sash, threw them with great precision at the mules, and then laying one hand upon the rail, leaped back into his seat. Inside, the unlucky passengers were packed like sardines, and all day long, across the dusty plains, up barren hills, on which the stones reflected back the heat, we jingled noisily. Now and again the old rope harness broke, and we stopped half an hour to get it spliced, and then jogged on again.

"Sometimes we crawled along at a foot pace, and then again rushed down a hill-side madly, the diligence swaying and rocking like a ship at sea and lurching on the stones. When we changed horses we all got down, and smoked and drank a little *aguardiente*, tossing it off and swallowing water after it, for it was hot as fire.

"We stopped and dined in a small inn at a four-cross-road, and as the food was cooking at a huge, open fireplace in the great dining-room, I listened to the vicissitudes of my new friend's life in the Andean mining camps, and gathered that he had brought more treasure home from the New World in knowledge of mankind than in mere specie. However, he appeared skilled in his own profession, and certainly was most agreeable as a travelling companion, and

well endowed with all that optimism which but intensifies in every miner as he gets on in life.

"Late in the evening the diligence jogged into a little town, the horses and the mules dead beat, and all the passengers shaken like walnuts in a sack, stiff, bruised and sore, dusty and travel-stained."

My friend McFarlane paused in his tale, and looking at me said, "I wish you could have seen me with my mining engineer, seated at the long table under the evil-smelling lamp, with the heterogeneous company that assembles for dinner in the best inn of a small Spanish town. Three Government officials, an officer or two, with several commercial travellers and a priest, were the sole company on this occasion, and, as was not unnatural, their curiosity was aroused as to the reason that could have brought two foreigners, evidently not travelling to sell goods, to a place so remote.

"We bumped into the little village of Carraceido in the afternoon, and saw the diligence go on, after it had changed horses, with something of the feeling that a man on a raft must have when a ship passes without perceiving him and leaves him to his fate.

"I tell you," said McFarlane, "I felt just like the Scotchman who was going to be hanged . . . you know the story . . . disgusted with the whole proceedings . . . there, on that afternoon.

"The whole thing was so utterly absurd, to have come so far about a mine that it was twenty-five to one never existed, or if it had, was worked out centuries ago and clean forgotten by mankind.

"However, there we were, I and my mining engineer, in the remote and tiny Spanish village, and the best thing we had to do was to take up our bags and walk into the inn. We watched the diligence on the straight, dusty road till it had vanished, and then turned to the innkeeper, a fat, broad-shouldered man in a short jacket edged with imitation astrakhan, a wide black sash round his tight trousers, and his feet shod with *alpargatas*, who gravely greeted us. Following him through the great storeroom on the ground floor, which led into the stables at one end, we stumbled up a stair steep as a ladder, and were ushered to a room.

"Two iron beds, with vignettes of the Madonna at the head in coloured tin, the mat-

tresses stuffed with dried maize leaves, two rickety rush-bottomed chairs, a wooden table, and a small wash-stand were the adornments of the place—not much, but yet sufficient for the wants of the stray guests who visited the inn.

"'Here can your worships rest,' our host remarked, and left us to ourselves. Don Tomas Garnard, as by this time I called the mining engineer, rose to the occasion, and after saying that a tambo in the Andes of Peru was ten times worse, and that at least we had the sun in Carraceido, opened the window, and we looked out upon the hills.

"Groves of great chestnut-trees covered them, clothing the slopes with a thick veil of green. Through the thick copse, the bright red soil appeared as if the ground was bleeding, and above the trees stretched the brown hill-side, covered with cistus and with thyme, which gave a scent so pungent and so keen that it filled all the air. Upon the other side the lake of Carraceido lay, broad, dark, and motionless. Great banks of bulrushes seemed to fence it in, and through them lanes were cut, in which lay several flat-bottomed boats, and, nearer to the shore, cattle were standing

knee-deep in the water, with their tails lashing off the flies.

"In the far distance rose the Asturian mountains, whilst a small river running near the inn tinkled amongst the stones.

"It was a lovely landscape, just like an idyll by Theocritus; in it the vines hung from stone trellises, the husbandman at evening, shouldering his plough, made from a piece of wood and tipped with iron, slowly walked homewards, smoking, and shepherds who piping on a reed were followed by their sheep without a dog to bark and worry at their heels, as in more favoured lands."

McFarlane sighed, and his mind seemed to dwell upon the sight of flocks in England driven towards the slaughter-houses with blows and curses, two or three bob-tailed dogs, far more humane, if not so human as their masters, urging them on to death.

He did not give his thoughts expression, and no doubt in every case the sheep's fate is to be eaten, just as the swimmer's is to be taken by the sea. "You mind," he said, "the Roman legionaries, when they got to the place —for after all the Val de Orras is not far from the famed river that they took for Lethe—

refused to cross, sat down, and but for their commanders would have beat their short broad-swords either to ploughshares or to reaping-hooks."

I nodded, and he went on :

"Next morning, after a night I shall not easily forget, although the landlord denied with oaths that there were fleas, as if we thought of them, having seen the far too friendly little faces of much greater wonders of the insect world peer out at us from every quarter of the room, we dressed and wandered out.

"The Roman mine was a tradition of the place, well known to everyone, and in the River Sil after a flood people occasionally washed out a pan or two and got a little gold. This set my friend afire, and all the day he wandered up and down, jotting down what he heard in a crushed note-book, greasy and dog-eared, in order, as he said, to strike an average of the lies when he had panned them out.

"I wonder at myself," remarked McFarlane. "I do so now! I did so then! But by degrees the whole fantastic thing—scheme, expedition, or adventure, call it what you will—took hold of me, and I began half to believe I was about to make a fortune, half to believe I was a fool.

Never in all my life, since my brief sojourn at the Zacatecas Mines, did I hear so much mining talk. Pay-dirt and bed-rock, gold in the quartz, in placer-diggings, and many other terms of which I had no real idea of the true value, were always in my head. One morning Don Tomas came rushing in, roaring 'Eureka!' but luckily more suitably attired than Archimedes, and explained that he had found a man who knew the Roman gold-mine, that it was three leagues off amongst the hills, and by the account must have been a great placer-working in the old Roman times.

"For some strange reason, which I forget or disremember, for the two states of memory are very different, we arranged to start about an hour before the sun went down and camp amongst the hills. We left the village mounted on mules, with a man following upon a donkey carrying provisions, late in the afternoon.

"Most of the inhabitants stood at their doors to see us start, for every living soul knew of our expedition, and the Roman mine had been a household word to all of them from their earliest youth, not much believed in, but still ever present to their minds.

"With the grave cynicism of Spanish

peasants, they looked on us as madmen; but with the materialism of their race were quite prepared to take advantage of the fruits of our mad brains. In the meantime, the hire of the mules had been a godsend to them, for in the village hardly any money circulated, although for all that the inhabitants were as ready at a bargain as if they had been brought up on the Stock Exchange.

"Don Tomas Garnard . . . as he now styled himself with pride . . . went about making preparations as if he thought the mine was found, the money got together to exploit it, and that we were in some way benefactors of mankind, and deserved well of Spain. Speaking but little Spanish, and understanding less, he was immune from the disparaging remarks that fell so freely from the villagers, who, as is usually the case the whole world over, were critical just in proportion to their ignorance—a reflection artists of every kind may take for their own consolation when they read hostile comments on their work set forth with circumstance. Our landlord, who was a man who had a certain knowledge of the world, having often been in Lugo, and even visited Leon, looked on himself as an authority. We heard him

saying, 'No, friends, I do not think these men are mad. They paid my bill in good, sound money, for I tested every piece. The madman does not pay. Therefore I think they must be really engineers, these Frenchmen, and it may be they will discover something beneficial to us all. Myself, I understand them well, having seen many of the French in Lugo, and I can vouch they both are honourable men.'

"This testimony did us much good, and I believe we started out upon that scorching afternoon, leaving the villagers in the same spirit of half-respectful admiration, tinged a little with contempt, that the inhabitants of Palos manifested towards Columbus, as he walked down to the beach to sail for the New World.

"The track we followed in the sweltering heat led upwards for a mile or two through chestnut woods, the bright, red soil covered with banks of cistus in the open places, whose flowers looked like a flight of great white butterflies. The scent of thyme and rosemary penetrated to our souls, poignant and aromatic, as our beasts stumbled on the stones. Behind us, calling out 'Arré!' in a perfunctory way, our guide walked by his loaded donkey, smoking,

and singing now and then a Ribeirana in a falsetto key. About half-way, just as we rested for a moment by a projecting rock, the light began to fail, and from the village rose the Angelus, just as a sheep-bell tinkles in the hills to warn the sheep that may be wandering, that it is folding-time.

"The moon rose brilliantly, casting strange shadows on the wild path that we were following. Stones turned to boulders, dead stumps of trees to threatening figures pointing strange weapons at us in her distorting rays; and frogs and crickets filled the night with melody.

"After an hour or two of struggling upwards, the path got easier to travel, and led us out into a little open glade amongst some chestnut-trees.

"Our guide dismounted, for he had clambered up upon his beast and had been sitting sideways on the pack, let loose his donkey, hobbled its feet, and, drawing out his flint and steel, soon had a bright fire burning underneath a tree.

"When we had made some tea and smoked a cigarette, we strolled across the little clearing, and a most wondrous view, made still more marvellous by the moon's glittering beams, lay

stretched beneath us, for the green glade ended abruptly in a precipice. Sheer down it went, and seemed unfathomable. It looked as if a monstrous bowl had been dug out of the red earth about a quarter of a mile across. A chestnut wood, dark and mysterious in the moonlight, covered the bottom of the bowl. The depth and the false perspective that the moonlight gave to everything, made it look like a carpet. Here and there in patches you could see the ground, and from the patches towered great pinnacles of dark red earth three or four hundred feet in height.

"Upon their tops grew bushes, making them look like some fantastic vegetable. The moonbeams played upon them, magnifying and distorting them, and striking here and there upon a pebble in their sides, which sparkled brilliantly. So still was everything that we stood looking, awestruck, till the guide, advancing cautiously up to the hedge, held out a lean, brown finger and said, 'That is the Roman mine.'

"I almost had to pinch myself to be sure I was awake, the whole thing was so strange. Here I was a relatively sensible man, who after having left his house a thousand miles

away, upon the wildest wild-goose chase imaginable, without an indication but a vague passage in a book written nearly two thousand years ago, and yet I heard our guide's remark, which he proffered quite as a thing of course, and with my eyes I gazed into the mighty chasm in the hill that I at once saw was in some way or other the work of human hands. Don Tomas Garnard, on the contrary, saw at a glance the whole affair, and with a shout exclaimed, 'A placer-working! What wonderful men the Romans were. In some way that I cannot see from here, they had washed down the whole hill-side just as we do to-day.'

"I wandered up and down the clearing, smoking, but always coming back to the edge of the chasm, listening occasionally to Don Tomas, who had become almost ecstatic in his joy. 'To-morrow, when it is light,' he said, 'we must get down from this place where the idiot of a guide has brought us to, and get to work at once.' The night wore on, and just about the dawn the howling of a wolf deep in the hills just reached us, but clear enough to startle both the mules, who strained upon their ropes and trembled, and would have broken loose had we not quieted them.

"The world seemed just as far away as the fixed stars, and we ourselves felt as if all its inhabitants had disappeared, leaving alive only ourselves and the three animals, under the starry sky.

"Early next morning we began our work, after having got down to the level of the great placer-digging by a winding path made by the goats in the hill-side.

"We found our guide, for reasons known but to himself, had brought us to the highest point, though on the other side of the great basin there was no precipice. Perhaps he thought the effect was better from the height, but anyhow the view into the corrie was magnificent, and from no other point could we have had the same sensation when he said 'There is the Roman mine.'

"We had to move our camp, for the goats' track was not the most convenient path to use in going up and down. So we established ourselves under a spreading chestnut-tree, and sent the guide back on a mule for more provisions, and then began to look the proposition (as Don Tomas said) in the face.

"At the first glance, that is, at the first glance to a man experienced in such things, the place

had been worked systematically. Don Tomas pointed out the cuttings, waterways, and places where he said the Romans had their sluices, and I said 'Yes' to everything, and by degrees began to think that I was mad.

"Enthusiasm is so catching," said McFarlane, and smiled, half at himself, half at humanity in general. "Without it, where would have been the founders of religions, discoverers, prophets, and leaders of all kinds, who, after all, when they stood out and shouted 'follow me,' had nothing to depend upon except the trust that they excited in themselves? Anyhow, for the next day or two we washed out countless pans of dirt, hoping always that the Romans, who, I was assured by Don Tomas, must have worked in a primitive though scientific way—that is, for the times in which they lived—had left enough gold in the ground to make it worth our while to go and what is called denounce the mine, and claim it for ourselves. We washed and worked, prospecting all the ground as thoroughly as possible, Don Tomas walking over the whole basin just as a spaniel quarters a cover, and talking volubly about our prospects of success.

"He said if we could get only the colour,

which I understood to mean the smallest particle of gold, that we should have enough to make our fortunes twenty times over, for in the hollow where the ancient workings lay there must have been ten acres at the least. Each time we washed a pan towards the end the same thing happened: Don Tomas grew excited, swearing that this time we were certain of it; and when each time nothing but fine red sediment remained, mixed with some little pebbles, he was quite sure that the next try was certain to give something better, and so the time wore on.

"For my part, the first day was quite sufficient; and though the enthusiasm of my companion had worked a little on my mind, and the site of the ancient placer-digging certainly stirred a vaguish kind of hope, I had had enough of it, and my back ached with washing out the pans. I had not told you that a small stream ran through the middle of the working, and on its edge we stood and washed until I grew to hate the very sight of the whole place, and it seemed that in all my life I had done nothing else but wash out mud in a tin pan, and then begin again.

"Still Don Tomas was not discouraged, for

he maintained that the Romans, who had evidently disposed of water-power by damming up all the streams in the district, for in our rambles we had found remains of ancient dams, had worked the surface dirt so clean that there was nothing we could get at by our rude attempts; but for all that, a scientific assay might reveal the presence of some gold.

"He argued that in the columns which were left standing, columns which neither of us could explain, there must be earth which never had been touched. Therefore, if in that basin there had once been gold, in the parts of it that never had been worked, some gold must still remain if we could hit upon it.

"As this seemed reasonable, we loaded up a mule with two great sacks of earth dug from the heart of one of the tall pillars, and after having taken a last look at the great corrie in the hill, its groves of chestnut trees, its bright red soil, its growth of cistus, and its banks of thyme, germander, and of rosemary, we loaded up our beasts with the remains of the provisions, our pots and kettles, our blankets and the abominable tin pans, and took our way to Carraceido, tired, eaten by mosquitoes, sunburned, with our hands blistered, and in that

state of mind in which a man will quarrel with his dearest friend about the colour of a mule. However, Don Tomas was not a man to quarrel with, and as he sat upon his mule, his knees almost upon a level with his chin, his gaiters half unbuttoned, a stick cut from a bush in his right hand, and the reins in his left all in a bunch, tugging continually at the beast's mouth, he looked so comical, with his red face, surrounded by a frill of greyish whisker, his keen grey eyes peering out on the world as if it were a mine to be prospected, one could not help but laugh, however much you were annoyed.

"All his talk ran upon what we should do in Lima, for he could never get out of his head that he was not still in Peru, and of the probabilities of our success. I let him talk, feeling that our success lay but in the experience we had acquired, and the possession of the view of the old Roman working, first seen by moonlight, from the lone clearing in the woods. Nothing could ever stamp that out, nothing destroy the wildness of the sound of the long-drawn-out howling of the wolf heard on that moonlit night.

"Soon we drew near the village, and if our

setting out had been received but coldly, nothing could well have been more cordial than our welcome on our return. The villagers went immediately from one extreme right to the other, and when they saw the laden mule, the wildest rumours as to our suc cess were set about at once. The little street was full—women stood at the doors, and children ran about like rabbits, whilst men stepped forward to congratulate us on having found the mine.

"The innkeeper hailed us as the saviours of the district, and after we had washed and had a meal, the precious sacks, having been put beneath the beds and the door locked, a sort of deputation of the chief inhabitants, with the priest at its head, appeared to interview us on all that we had seen.

"We sat down in the *patio* and called for wine, after having sent out to the *estanco* for cigars. The priest stepped forward, and, taking off his hat, harangued us briefly on the ancient Romans, on British energy, and on the wealth that he supposed would flow into the town when we had got the mine in order and once begun to work. He said that, owing to bad government, the state of parties, and the

lack of confidence existing betwixt man and man, so contrary to the principles of our holy faith, Spain had gone through a period of decay. This, as a patriot, he deplored, and trusted that with the well-known energy of Englishmen . . . Spain, he observed, had always been the friend of England since Vilanton had come to help the Spaniards to expel the French . . . we should at least in Carraceido . . . that Carraceido which had always been well known for its patriotic principles . . . be enabled to remove the curse that lay upon our land.

"He thanked us both—me for my public spirit, and Don Tomas for that hard-headed shrewdness and engineering knowledge that distinguished him—and hoped that when Pactolus had poured a stream of gold into the place, two of the streets of the new town that would arise should bear our honourable names.

"The miller was more brief, and merely said he knew we had the gold, for he had seen the sacks upon the mule. No one could come to him, as he said, with celestial music; he was a practical and a hard-working man, but seeing is believing, and so he wished us luck, remarking that he cared little for the ancient

Romans, who he had always understood were hardly better than the Moors; but in all cases, if they had been so foolish as to leave their gold up in the hills, it was a right and proper thing Christians should profit by their carelessness.

"We then drank gravely to the health of England and of Spain in a rough, heady, new, red wine, tasting of earth and pigskin, and lighting our cigars, long rolls of blackish-looking leaf that burned as if they had been dipped in nitre, tilted our chairs against the wall and fell a-talking as we smoked. Much did we say about the badness of the Government, the infamy of those in high estate, the price of bullocks at Brañuelas market, and other topics of the kind, till someone went and fetched the music, which consisted of a man who played on a shrill pipe called the *dulzaina*, to the accompaniment of a little drum, on which the executant beat with his right hand just as the Arabs beat a tom-tom, and with his left scratched on the parchment with a stick. The noise was terrible, and echoed in the courtyard until the very walls appeared to tremble, and lasted for a full hour, until the players ceased as suddenly as they began, and, after tossing

off their wine, deigned to accept of half a dollar, and retire, leaving us stupefied. As the performers went down the village street their deafening harmony by degrees became assuaged, and, in the silent air, gradually blended into a curious mixture of the singing of a cricket and of the noise made by a water-mill, not disagreeable and quite in character with the half-savage nature of the place.

"Next morning found us with our luggage and our sacks waiting to take the diligence as it passed by the little inn. The landlord, who had been so surly and indifferent, had now become a friend. He shook us warmly by the hand, asking us to remember that Ildefonso Lopez was our friend and servant, and that he trusted on our return we would not forget him, for upon his part he accompanied us in spirit upon our mission to the Court, and wished us great success.

"When we had piled our things into the rickety, old coach, drawn by its four thin mules and an apocalyptic horse, and it began to jingle off, I looked back on the place which I had visited under such curious circumstances with the feeling of regret mingled with joy with which a shipwrecked sailor, who has been

rescued by a passing ship, might look upon the island where he has spent so many lonely months, as it sinks back into the sea.

"Of course, I knew that the whole thing was finished, and was half sorry; but Don Tomas was still enthusiastic, and remained so until we watched the final process of the assay in the Mining College of Madrid.

"Needless to say, it proved infructuous, though I will not deny, as we watched the final firing down of our two sacks till they became a handful of red dust in the last crucible, that I was stirred by hope and fear in an unconscionable way."

McFarlane ceased. In the smoking-room of his old Georgian house the fire burned low upon the hearth, and its light flickered on the faces of his grim-visaged ancestors whose effigies adorned the walls and seemed to smile at him.

From the terraces outside came the low belling of a roe, and the long branches of the cedars, stirred gently by the breeze, looked almost human, as if their fingers wished to clutch at something, as they swayed to and fro.

McFarlane sighed, and, as he lit another cigarette, said quietly:

"Sometimes as I sit here alone, watching the moonbeams mingle with the fire, I fancy that I own a mine in which there are no shareholders, no calls for money, and which has no quotations of its stock. I work it, only by moonlight and with the help of the old Romans, and it yields millions to me, both in experience and recollection, as I await the day when the chief street in the regenerated Carraceido shall bear my honourable name."

THE BEGGAR EARL

MANY a shadowy figure has flitted through the valley of Menteith. Just as the vale itself is full of shadows, shadows that leave no traces of their passage, but, whilst they last, seem just as real as are the hills themselves, so not a few of those who have lived in it seem unsubstantial and as illusive as a ghost.

Perhaps less real, for if a man detects a spectre with that interior vision dear to the Highlanders and to all mystics, Highland or Lowland, or from whatever land they be, he has as surely seen it, for himself, as if the phantasm was pictured on the retina of the exterior eye.

Pixies, trolls, and fairies, the men of peace, the dwellers in the Fairy Hill that opens upon Hallowe'en alone, and from which issues a long train, bringing with them our long-lost vicar Kirke of Aberfoyle. True Thomas, and the rest of all the mortals who forsook their porridge three times a day, for the love of some

elf queen, and have remained as flies embedded in the amber of tradition, are in a way prosaic. Men have imagined them, enduing them with their own qualities, just as they have endued their gods with jealousy and hate. Those born in the ordinary, but miraculous, fashion of mankind, who live apparently by bread alone, and yet remain beings apart, not touched by praise, ambition, or any of the things that move their fellows, are the true fairies after all.

Such a one was the beggar earl. All his long life he lacked advancement, finding it only at the last, as he died, like a cadger's pony, by a dykeside in the snow. That kind of death keeps a man's memory fresh.

Few can tell to-day where or in what manner died his ancestors—the mail-clad knights who fought at Flodden, counselled kings, with the half-Highland cunning of their race, and generally opposed the Southrons, who, impotent to conquer us in war, yet have filched from us most of our national character by the soft arts of peace. A mouldering slab of freestone here and there, a nameless statue of a Crusader with his crossed feet resting upon his dog, in the ebenezerised cathedral of Dun-

blane; a little castle on a little reedy island in a bulrush-circled lake, some time-stained parchments in old muniments preserve their memory, . . . to those who care for memories, a futile and a disappearing race.

His is preserved in snow. Nothing is more enduring than the snow. It falls, and straight all is transfigured. All suffers a chromatic change: that which was black or red, brown, yellow or dark grey, is changed to white, so white that it remains for ever stamped on the mind, and one recalls the landscape, with its fairy woods, its stiff, dead streams, its suffering trees and withered vegetation, as it was on that day.

So has the recollection of the beggar earl remained, a legend, and all his humble life, his struggles and his fixed, foolish purpose been forgotten; leaving his death as it were embalmed in something of itself so perishable that it has had no time to die.

No mere success, the most vulgar thing that a man can endure, would have been so lasting, for men resent success and strive to stifle it under their applause, lauding the result, the better to belittle all the means. His life was not especially eventful, still less mysterious,

for the poor play out their part in public, and a greater mystic than himself has said, "The poor make no noise."

Someone who knew him said he was "a little man; a little clean man, that went round about through the country. He never saw him act wrong. . . . He was—just a man asking charity. He went into farmhouses and asked for victuals; what they would give him; and into gentlemen's houses."

This little picture, drawn unconsciously, shows us the man he was after ill-fortune overtook him. For a brief season he had been well known in Edinburgh. In 1744, when he was studying medicine, he suddenly appeared at the election of a Scottish peer and told the assembly who he was, and claimed the right to vote.

From that time till his death, he never dropped his claim, attending all elections of a Scottish peer till he got weary of the game. Then disillusion fell on him, and he withdrew to beg his bread, and wander up and down his earldom and the neighbouring lands, until his death.

Once more he came into public view, in the year 1747, when he published his rare pamphlet, *The Fatal Consequences of Discord*, dedicated

to the Prince of Wales. In it he says "that there can be no true unity without religion and virtue in a State."

This marks him as a man designed by nature to be poor, for unity and virtue are not commodities that command a ready sale.

He had not any special gift, but faith, and that perhaps sustained him in his wanderings. Perhaps he may have thought that he would sit some day in a celestial senate, and this belief consoled him for his rejection by an earthly house of peers. One thing is certain, even had the House of Lords, that disallowed his claim, although he voted several years in Edinburgh, approved him as a peer, it would not have convinced him of his right one atom more; for if a man is happy in conviction, he had it to the full.

It is said he bore about with him papers and pedigrees that he would never sell. No bartering of the crown for him, even for bread. A little, grey, clean-looking man, mounted upon an old white pony, falling by degrees into most abject poverty and still respected for his uprightness, and perhaps a little for his ancestry, for in those days that which to us is but a mockery, was real, just as some things which

with us are valued, in those days would have been ridiculous.

So through the valley of Menteith, along the Endrick, and by Loch Lomond side, past the old church at Kilmaronock, through Gartocharn, and up and down the Leven, he took his pilgrimage.

Over the wild track on the Dumbarton moor, and past the waterfall at the head of the glen of Galingad, he and his pony must have wandered many times, reflecting that the lands he passed over should have been all his own, for he was really Earl of Menteith by right and by descent, no matter though his fellow peers refused to recognize him. He talked at first, in any house he came to, of his rights, and people having little news to distract them in those days, were no doubt pleased to hear him and to inveigh against injustice in the way that those who had themselves received it all their lives are always pleased to talk.

So does a goaded ox lower his head and whisk his tail, and then, after a glance thrown at his fellow, strain once again upon the yoke. Then, when the novelty was over they would receive his stories with less interest, driving

him back upon himself, until most likely he bore his wrongs about with him, just as a pedlar bears his pack, in silence, and alone. So did he, when the first efforts to obtain his title and his rights had spent their force, quit Edinburgh as it had been a city of the plague when there was any election of a peer.

Whilst he was wandering up and down the parishes of Kilmaronock and of Port, Scotland was all convulsed with the late rising of '45. Parties of soldiers, and bands of Highlanders, retreating to the north, must have passed by him daily, and yet he never seems to have had the inclination to change sides. Staunch in his allegiance to the Government, and with a faith well grounded in the Protestant Succession, as his pamphlet shows, most probably he was a Church and State man, as he would have said, up to his dying day.

Of such, as far as kings and rulers are concerned, are the elect, and thrones are founded on this unquestioning belief, more strongly than on armies or in Courts.

As the years passed, and he still wandered up and down Menteith, losing by degrees the little culture that his studies had implanted in

him when he attended the Edinburgh schools, the farmers must have begun to treat him, first as one of themselves, and then just as they would have treated any other wandering beggar-man. Still, on the few occasions when he had to write a letter he always signed "Menteith," especially to begging letters, and the signature, no doubt, consoled him many a time for a refusal of his plea.

Few could have known all the traditions of the district as did the wandering earl; but he most probably, living amongst them, thought them not in the least remarkable, for it needs time and distance to make old legends interesting.

He and his pony must have been familiar figures on the roads, and when he came to a wild moorland farm, no doubt they welcomed him, expecting news from the outside world, and were a little disappointed when he sat silent in the settle, gazing into the smouldering peats, brooding upon his wrongs.

At such times, most likely he drew out his cherished papers from his wallet and pored upon them, though he must long ago have known them all by heart, and as he read them all his pride in his old lineage revived, and the

long day upon hill tracks may have seemed light to him as he sat nodding by the fire. His hosts, with the old-fashioned hospitality of those times, would set before him a great bowl of porridge, which he must often only have eaten for good manners' sake, and then gone off to sleep beside his pony on the straw.

How many years he wandered through the mosses and the hills, how many times he saw the shaws in April green upon the Fairy Hill, or the red glow upon the moor in autumn, is not quite clear; but all the time he never once forsook his wanderings. Offers were made him, by many of his friends, to settle down; but either the free life held something for him that no mere dwelling in a house could give, or else he thought himself more likely to attain his object by being always on the road, travelling, as it were, like a Knight of the Holy Grail, towards some goal unseen that fascinated him, still always further on.

No doubt the darksome thickets by loch sides, in which he and his pony must have passed so many summer nights, were pleasanter than a smoke-infested Highland shieling. Sleeping alone in them he could hear all the

mysterious voices of the night; hear wild ducks whirring overhead, the cries of herons in the early morning, the splash made by the rising trout, and watch the mist at dawn creeping upon the water as he lay huddled in his plaid.

All our old tracks, so long disused, but visible to those who look for such things, by their white stones, on which so many generations of brogue-clad feet have passed, and by the dark green grass that marks them as they meander across uplands or through the valleys, he must have known as well as did the drovers coming from the north.

Lone wells, that lie forgotten nowadays, but of which then the passers-by all knew and drank from, he too had drunk from, lying upon his chest, and with his beard floating like sea-weed in the water as he lay.

Mists must have shrouded him, as he rode through the hills, and out of them strange faces must have peered, terrible and fantastic to a man alone and cut off from mankind.

Possibly to him the faces seemed familiar and more kindly than were those he generally saw upon his pilgrimage. If there were fairies seated on the green knolls, he must have

seemed to them one of themselves, for certainly he was a man of peace.

Cold, wind and rain and snow must have beat on him as they do upon a tree, but not for that did he once stay his wanderings up and down. As age drew on him it was observed that by degrees he seldom left his native parish, Kilmaronock, where he was known and understood by all.

There is a tract of moorland, high-lying and bleak, from which at the top you see Loch Lomond and its islands lying out as in a map beneath. The grey Inch Cailleach, and dark Inch Murren with its yews float in the foreground like hulks of ships, and the black rock of Balmaha rises above a little reedy bay. Just at the bleakest part of the bare moor the wandering earl was seen by some returning drovers on a cold winter's night. Light snow was falling, and as they passed him on the wild track that leads down to the vale of Leven, huddled up on his pony, they spoke to him, but he returned no answer, and passed on into the storm. All night it snowed, and in the morning, when the heritors were coming to the old kirk of Bonhill parish, they found him with his back against a dry stone dyke,

and his beloved parchments in his hand. Not far away his old white pony, with the reins dangling round his feet, stood shivering, and in the snow where he had thrust his muzzle deeply down to seek the grass were some faint stains of blood.

A BELLY-GOD

THE Minister of Costalarga lived at the corner of a gaunt, new square, just at the back of the old convent of Las Salesas, in Madrid. The enormous red brick building, now turned into a law court, filled one corner of the square.

Well did the Madrilenian people say it was a barbarous affair, built in a barbarous style, by a barbarian queen.

Dwindling acacias, burned by the sun and wind, with a few clumps of dusty oleanders, stood forlornly here and there, and in the cables of the tramway line, the tails of kites were always to be seen entangled, draggled and dirty, and looking like dead birds.

The nymph that stood upon a dolphin in the middle of the stuccoed fountain basin seemed to be taking medicine through the conch-shell which was stuck into her mouth, and pointed at the sky. One longed to take it from her lips, throw it away, and tell her she had had enough of it.

Over the doorway of the house in which the representative of Costalarga lived was hung the shield of the Republic, barred in broad strips of blue. In the chief quarter of the shield appeared a chain of mountains, on one of which was hung a cap of liberty. Over the last peak of the chain, the sun was rising with a grin. All the compatriots of the Minister, who were marooned, as it were, from want of funds, asked their way to the house on which the arms of the Republic were displayed.

On almost every day, at office hours, that is, between eleven and three, one or two olive-coloured men were certain to appear. Andrés, the old Galician hall-porter, looked on them with great disfavour, observing, "There goes another Indian in a top-hat; he is safe to touch our Minister for money! That's all they come about"; then he would curse their mothers, quite in the Oriental style, calling them sons of sitters at the windows, on the look-out for men.

His fears were not ill-founded, for in addition to his compatriots, there was a constant influx of distressed literary men, who came to the Legation knowing the Minister himself was known, as they would say, in the Republic of the Muses, and for a tender-hearted man.

Standing, and looking from his window in the square, one day he saw a man reading a newspaper. At the first glance, he knew he was a foreigner, ragged and miserable. The man folded his newspaper, which fell into its folds as if it were a map, stuffed it into his pocket, dusted his trousers, pulled up his collar, and fastening up his coat, began to walk towards the house. Then he went back, and sitting down again, once more drew out his dirty newspaper.

"I watched him," said the Minister, "half-compassionately! that is to say half in compassion for myself, for I was married and had children, half in compassion for his misery, for I discerned at once that in the end he would choke down his shyness and his pride and come and call on me.

"At last he did so, and having run the gauntlet of Andrés, was ushered up to where I sat, in a room filled with papers and with books, which perhaps gave him courage to speak out, by their familiar air. Before he spoke he had reminded me of the protagonist in an old Spanish comedy, *El Vergonzante en Palacio*, he was so ill at ease and shy and awkward in his ways. Beginning in a halting

Spanish, with all the verbs in the infinitive, he lapsed at once into his native tongue, when I addressed him in it, after having read his card. On it was written 'Mr. William Heyward'—why do you English alone of all the world, put 'Mr.' on your cards, I wonder ?—and the address of a poor boarding-house kept by an Englishwoman, one Señora Smith. I looked at Mr. Heyward as he sat twisting his hat round in his hands. Instantly I seemed to read his history. His thin and undecided-looking hands had several warts upon them, and his whole air showed he was fed on tea and bread and butter, which had turned his skin to a faint muddy colour, something like a frog.

"Withal, I saw he was a man of education, and so when I had given him a cigarette, I asked what it was I could do for him, although I knew he wanted work and food. 'Your Excellency,' he said, and when I said 'For God's sake do not call me Excellency,' he began again, 'Your Excellency, I have ventured . . . ventured to call upon you, though it has cost me a great deal.'

"I knew about his effort, for I had seen it, and knew exactly in which pocket the crushed and much-read newspaper reposed, but merely

smiled at him in as encouraging a way as possible.

"'Your Excellency,' he went on, 'the fact is, I am almost beat. There is nothing for an educated man to do, at least an educated foreigner, here in Madrid. I have been a tutor, teaching English in a family, but lost the job, partly on account, I think, of my bad clothes, and partly because I have no aptitude for teaching anything. I have done a little in the office of an agent for patent medicines, and I have kept Señora Smith's accounts. She is the owner of the boarding-house where I am staying, but now she tells me that she cannot afford to keep me on, and so I have been wandering about looking for literary work . . . to the Consulate, the Embassy, and all the bookshops, but they all bowed me out.'

"I looked at him and did not wonder, for you know what Madrid is like. Everyone writes and no one reads, and even natives of the place have a hard fight to live. A fight, yes, that is the word, for life; there is a battle with the climate to begin with, and then with everyone. To make a long story short, I took him into my employment, for I was then at work upon a thousand things. I think I had

a book on Costalarga and its resources, mineral and agricultural, and as a field for emigration, on the stocks; some poetry of my own, a novel, and no end of work which rightly should have fallen to the Consul, if we had had one in Madrid.

"Poor Mr. Heyward was profuse in thanks, and I soon found him useful enough for work requiring no initiative. Naturally he could not write shorthand, knew little French, was quite impossible in Spanish, and what I had often found in educated Englishmen, had not the least idea of English grammar or of style. As I paid him every week, he by degrees got into better case, bought a few clothes, and even had a little colour in his cheeks, and I once heard him whistling a 'Tango,' but grossly out of tune.

"Andrés, my porter, never was reconciled to him, and used to speak of him as 'the foundling Englishman the Minister has got to serve as secretary.' I think I told you that Andrés was a Galician, with all the vices and the virtues of his race. No one, not born a millionaire, could possibly have had the sentiment of property better developed than Andrés.

"Though he had never had much property

himself, he looked on it as something sacred, and on me, though I confess I could hardly be called a man of property, as his especial charge.

"He used to reason with me, about putting money in a bank, an institution which, as he said, is liable to break, whereas if put into a stocking between two mattresses, or buried in a hole, money is safe, unless a man finds out the hiding-place.

"Nothing that Mr. Heyward possibly could do removed the suspicions of Andrés, who always looked on him in some way as an interloper, and used to ask me, 'Are there not plenty of poor Spaniards, men who understand the pen, but that you must take a foreigner, making your house a foundling hospital?' My porter had the spirit of the province and the town so strongly rooted in his blood, that almost everyone he looked on as a potential enemy, in the same way, no doubt, his Celt-Iberian and Suevian ancestors had looked upon mankind. Two years of service in his youth in Ceuta had but intensified the feeling, though now and then he used to say he had met honest Moors, 'men of one word,' as he expressed it, although but infidels. As regards human sympathy, he was,

just as I fancy are so many Spaniards, far more in sympathy with the Moors than with North Europeans, and certainly a Moor in their streets does not attract half so much criticism as would a Swedish countryman, clothed in his native dress.

"However, quite unconscious of the enmity he had evoked, Heyward went on writing my letters, helping me with my translations, for even if a man knows English pretty well, as I do, there are always niceties that he must miss in a work of long breath."

In point of fact, the Minister's command of English, Heyward used to say, was quite uncanny, and made him feel as if he were the foreigner, and his employer was the Englishman.

"As time went on, I got to like the fellow, and to understand his Anglo-Saxon and his special reticences.

"Sometimes he used to bring crushed, rather withered-looking flowers for my wife, and sweetmeats for the kids. He even would have given cigarettes to the hall-porter had he met with the least encouragement. In fact, he had the milk of human kindness in his blood, and to myself was grateful in so heartfelt a way, it used to make me quite uncomfortable. You

know amongst us Latins envy replaces your hypocrisy, and to oblige a man is generally to make an enemy.

"One thing there was about my secretary that was a constant wonder and a source of pity to me. We, you know, have still preserved a little more formality in our address in Spanish countries than you have in the north. Whenever any of these long salutations inquiring as to his health and that of all his family was addressed to him, Heyward would colour up, flush, and become confused, and never find the right reply, but trip up in his speech.

"This attitude was incomprehensible to Spaniards, who used to call him proud and speak of him as being of a despotic character, and a despiser of the poor. When he first learned this, it pained him to the heart, for if he had to help a dog to jump upon a chair, he did it with humility, as if he did not wish to show the animal that it was in the least inferior to him, even in degree. Little by little he became extremely useful to me, and I used to put off on to his shoulders things that I ought to have looked into personally, about the Embassy.

"A countryman of mine of an inventive turn

of mind sent several cases to Madrid of some sort of compressed food that he wanted me to press upon the Government to take up for the troops. I can see the stuff arrive in three middling-sized cases, abnormally heavy, and soldered down with lead.

"Heyward and I opened them, and took note of the contents. I remember thinking if there was anything in the world that possibly could make a soldier's life more ignominious, it was to have to eat such horrid-looking stuff and read the misleading adjective 'palatable' stamped upon each slab. After a week of constant writing, I heard from the War Office that General Cañaheja would be glad to see me on a day, his secretary wrote, that would be convenient to him.

"I very nearly did not go, the form of his communication was so insolent, but after all, I thought, I do not want anything myself, so I will bear it for my countryman, and if his food is so deleterious as it looks, at least it will kill some of them. 'Another Spaniard gone to hell,' as we used to say when we killed one of them during our wars for independence, in my grandfather's time.

"Accompanied by Heyward, for he under-

stood the stuff better than I did, we visited the General at the War Office. The house, which was the palace of Godoy, Prince of the Peace (and lover of the Queen), in the days when Napoleon was about to receive the first kick, here in Spain, that showed mankind that he was vulnerable, was an enormous, red brick building with the windows faced in stone. It stood upon a little hill, in the middle of a garden, and day and night sentries paced up and down before its doors. When it so happened that a regiment of cavalry had to furnish men, the additional ridicule was added of a man walking to and fro in spurs, and looking like an alligator when he waddles on the sand. The enormous mass, which, as I said, in old days was the town house of Godoy, and now the focus of all that is most reactionary in Spain, impressed me disagreeably from the first moment that I entered it. One felt that constitutional liberty was left behind outside its iron gate, and that a heavy, but a stupid, hand lay over everything. Orders were shouted even if the men to whom they were delivered stood but a yard away, and the same man who stood so quietly to listen to them, turned and repeated them in the same voice and

key to his inferior, who roared to someone else.

"One official passed us on to another, and at last we stood, after climbing innumerable stairs, in the presence of the great man. He received us civilly enough, and promised—I had been a Minister myself in my own country, and know what a man in that position has to say—to look into the matter of the stores. As I looked at his short, squat figure, his blood-shot eyes and bristly moustache, his hairy hands, his ill-made civilian clothes, and recollected that it was he who had shot so many prisoners in cold blood, tortured a few, and finally returned from the last war a millionaire without seeing a shot fired, a mad desire came over me to spring and strangle him.

"Then I laughed at myself, for I reflected that, short-sighted as I was, all I should do would be perhaps to upset the inkstand, and that the General only had to call and I should be conducted out with ignominy, and in the morning the papers would appear with leaded types and with the headline, 'Sudden insanity of a Minister, and a Field-Marshal's calm.'

"So, after thanking General Cañaheja, I withdrew, taking my secretary, and certain

that the incident was closed, and the General would have forgotten all about the stores before I well had got into the street. However, I had complied (as we say), and now could write with a clear conscience to my poor friend at home.

"A few days afterwards, I received a sudden telegram calling me with all my family to Paris, and I remember now, as we walked up and down the station waiting for the train to start, that my poor secretary seemed to be struggling to say something; but I was occupied, and articulate speech was never his strong point, poor fellow, at any time of day. I see him now, as the train slowly drew out of the station, standing, as it were, framed in the rapidly diminishing glass arch, just like a miniature.

"Two months went by, in which I was so occupied in Paris that all thoughts of my secretary or of Madrid were quite obliterated. When I returned at last, as the train slowly jolted through Castile, passing the rocky desert between Avila and the Escorial, stopping at little stations where no one ever was known either to get in or out, all seemed familiar and yet strange to me. Spain has a hold on me that I believe no other country takes, life is so primitive and yet so intense, it seems as if you

touched the Middle Ages and the most ultra-modern life, when you stretch out your hands.

"Andrés, the porter, welcomed me with a long string of most minute inquiries as to my health, that of my wife and child, and as to how we had got through the journey, the whole concluding with his congratulations on our being once more in the Court. Nothing was to be seen of Mr. Heyward; but on my writing-desk was a long consular report I had asked him to draw out, carefully done and put where I could not have missed it; but without a word from him who drew it up. None of my servants could, or would, tell me about him, till I bethought me of Andrés.

"He came up, bursting with his subject, and informed me that he had something to impart that would astonish me.

"'That secretary,' he said, 'was nothing but a thief, a stealer of the sacrament. I never liked him from the first. A man that blushed and could not look you in the face when you but said good morning or good evening in Castilian to him; that made me think about him evilly. Your Excellency, pardon me, not being a son of the country, was too confident. My father always told me, "Andrés, never be

confident, do not facilitate a rogue. A rogue is like a Moorish horse; when things are going well, all of a sudden he spies a mare, sets up his back and squeals, and then where are you?" My father, too, had served, as I have, against the infidel.

"'Yes, Excellency, I will be brief. After a week or two, I remember this John, for I will not now give him the treatment of Don, which he has forfeited, seemed to fall back again into his old ways. He got more shy than ever—"Never trust a shy man, a friar, or a male mule," the proverb says—and never changed his shirt.

"'With licence, I may say, I think he had no shirt, and by degrees he used to bring in newspapers, handfuls of straw and sticks, that he had gathered in the streets, and other nastiness. One would have thought he was an ostrich about to build a nest. There used to be a smell of burning, and when I tried to look through the keyhole, I found it was plugged up.

"'Time went on so, and I each day more ill at ease, for, Excellency, I feared the man was plotting something; at last, after ten days or so, myself just like S. Lawrence on his gridiron, he went away; and from that moment I

have never looked upon his face. After a day or two I went into your study, for I had been so put about I was unable to attend to anything . . . even my duties to your Excellency. What a sight was there . . . a heap of ashes in the grate, and all your Excellency's boxes of compressed food standing quite empty, excepting one that had been burned to cook his delicacies. I saw it at a glance, this unlucky John had eaten everything. A wolf, your Excellency, a perfect belly-god. A man born without shame.'

"He stopped at last, and stood with a pleased look upon his face, certain that he had done his duty, and waiting for a word of compliment from me on his fidelity.

"A light broke in upon me, and a tingling, running from my toes, passed up my spinal marrow, making my very hair feel stiff and my skin turn as rough as sandpaper.

"Now I saw why Mr. Heyward's speech had remained undelivered when he came to see me off, despite the throes as of a parturition, which had so shaken him.

"You see, I used to pay him every Saturday, poor devil, and in the two long months that I had been away he had been famishing."

The Minister of Costalarga passed his hand over his sleek black hair uneasily, as he walked up and down the room; then, going to the window, he threw it open with a jerk and gazed out anxiously. No one was seated on the stucco benches of the great, deserted plaza, except a soldier of the Princesa's regiment, in his blue uniform guarded with silver lace. He sat, with a burned-out cigarette just hanging on his lips, in animated conversation with a girl carrying a basket on her arm, who, on her way to market, had stopped a moment, most probably to talk of military matters, with the warrior. The nymph, standing dejectedly upon her dolphin in the water-basin, was the sole witness of their interview. The conch-shell, seen from the side on which they sat, looked a little like an ear-trumpet which she had turned to spy upon their talk and catch their confidences. They did not heed it, and as a light air from the Guadarrama stirred the acacia leaves, making them shiver, and the dry oleanders rustle mournfully, the Minister, coming back into the room, shut to the window, murmuring, "I had half hoped that he might have been there, on the look-out for me."

FALKIRK TRYST

In these days when every vestige of old custom and old speech is being rapidly submerged in the dumb waves of progress, the word "Tryst" should be preserved by Act of Parliament. How well it figures in the Border Ballads—"Atte the Reidswire, the Tryst was set," "Gailie she came to the Trysting Tree," and half a hundred other instances, show what a fine poetic word it is. None other in the language could supply its place, . . . the trysting oak, at which Wallace is said to have convened his merry men in the Blane Valley, would sound poor enough, as poor as the Holy Scriptures, put into the modern vulgar tongue. Besides all this, it is a word that to Scotchmen (such as have no Gaelic) gives an air of superiority over the mere Englishman. Many years ago I crossed with a lady who always had maintained that between English and Lowland Scotch there was no difference, from the West Ferry to Dumbarton, in the ferry-boat.

It was raining cats and dogs, and, as we waited in the rain beside the rickety old pier below the castle, a cab drove slowly up. We eyed it curiously. I asked the driver to take us to the railway station. He rather surlily refused. Whereupon one of a host of long-shore youths who were standing, heedless of the rain, watching a full-rigged ship being towed down the Clyde (being moved apparently by the air of discomfort which the lady who was with me showed), remarked, "Hurl them up, Jimmy." Jimmy relaxed his features, and answered in an apologetic way, "I canna, man, I'm trysted."

We tramped up to the station in the rain, but never afterwards did my companion maintain that the two languages were identical.

During my boyhood, Falkirk Tryst was an event to be looked forward to, for droves of ponies from the Islands and the north used to be driven down the pass by an old drove road which passed Aberfoyle. Thin and wild-eyed, with ropy manes and tails that swept the ground, they strayed along.

Chestnuts and piebalds, duns with a black stripe down their back and markings like a tiger on the hocks, cream-colours with dark

tails and manes, skewbalds and bays (never a single roan), they used to remind me of the troops of mustangs that I had read of in Mayne Reid. Behind them on a pony, with his knees up to his mouth, a broken snaffle bridle, and in his hands a long, crooked hazel stick, the drover followed, always enveloped in his plaid. A dog or two hung at his pony's heels, and in a language that was strange to us as Telegú, he used to shout anathemas at beasts that lagged behind.

Slowly they trailed along, for time was what the driver had most at his command, stopping to crop the grass, or drink at the broad, shallow crossing of the mountain burns, standing about in knots knee-deep, and swishing with their tails, just as in after life I have seen wild horses do in both Americas. Foals trotted by their mothers' sides, and the whole road was blocked between its dry-stone dykes, surmounted by their feals.

Usually these herds of ponies, collected from the far Highlands and the Islands, were the first sign of the approaching Tryst. Sometimes, however, early in the morning if we were going out to fish, at one of those broad, grassy spaces, which in those days existed at

the crossing of four roads, one used to come upon men lying round a fire. Wrapped in their plaids on which the frost showed white, or the dew shone just as it does upon a spider's web, their sticks laid near their hands, they slumbered peacefully. Around them grazed West Highland cattle, black, dun, or chestnut, their peaceful disposition belied by their long, curving horns and shaggy foreheads, and as you passed, one of the men was sure to rise upon his elbow, pull his plaid off his head, and after looking around to see the cattle had not strayed, throw wood upon the fire, and then lie down to sleep again, after muttering a salutation either in Gaelic or in the sing-song English which in those days men of his kidney spoke. Great flocks of blackfaced sheep were also to be met with coming southwards to the Tryst, driven by men who daundered on behind them with that peculiar trailing step that only those who passed their lives upon the road were able to acquire. Generally two or three accompanied the herd, dressed usually in homespun tweeds, which smelt of wool and peat smoke, and were so thick that those who wore them looked like bears, as they lounged heavily along.

All of them had a collie, which if he was not trained, they led tied by a cord, without a collar round his neck, and fastened to a button on their coats. The dogs looked lean and wolfish, for it was long before the times when they were fashionable as pets, and at a sign, or in response to some deep guttural Gaelic order, they turned back straying sheep so dexterously, one used to wonder where the line that separated their instinct from their master's reason, ended or began.

As the droves slowly took their passage through the land, the drovers often would sell a pony-beast, or a stot that had got footsore, to farmers on the way. These sales were not concluded without expenditure of time and whisky and an infinity of talk.

Then the tired colt or calf was led into the byre, and the long line of ponies or of cattle started again, filling the road from side to side and leaving as it passed a wild, warm smell of mountain animals.

Such were the outward visible signs of Falkirk Tryst as I remember them, so many years ago, before the railways and the weekly sales reduced it to a mere cattle market, shorn of importance and of historic connection with the

past. The country folks in upland farms and grazing districts looked on it as one of the important functions of the year.

"So many weeks from the October Tryst," "It would be aboot the Tryst that Andra married Jean," "I canna pay ye till the Tryst," were all familiar sayings, and the date itself was as well known to all, as Hallowe'en or Hogmanay, or even the New Year.

In those days Christmas was not held as a holiday except in districts such as Strathglass, Morar, or Moidart, or in the islands where the old faith prevailed, and where the phrases "if you please" and "thank you" were usual accidents of speech, which to a free and self-respecting man were not derogatory.

Mankind, however, must have festivals, and thus the Tryst had somehow crept into the Scottish Colin Clouts' Calendar.

The drovers and the droves, coming as they did from the mysterious regions "above the pass," brought with them something of romance, and, in fact, as they strayed along our roads they always called to my recollection etchings by Callot of the Hungarian gipsies which, bound in an old crushed morocco cover, used to lie in the drawing-room and be shown

to us as children on Sundays and wet afternoons.

It may be, too, that, unknown to themselves, the Lowland ploughmen working in the fields looked at the drovers as a man accustomed to office work looks on a sailor as he passes by, with feelings oscillating between contempt and envy of his adventurous life.

Certain it was that the old Highland drovers would not have changed their mode of life for anything. To wake up on a bright morning in October, and shake the hoar frost from one's clothes, collect the cattle, and having sent the whisky bottle round, once more to find oneself upon the road, with the scene changing constantly as you strolled along, must have been pleasanter by far than settled occupation with its dull daily round.

To travel round the Highlands buying a pony here, another there, three or four ewes or stots on one farm, and then setting out upon the trip to Falkirk, sleeping by the herd, and after perhaps a fortnight arriving at the Tryst, to find the booth set up, the other drovers gradually dropping in, exchanging notes on prices, and on the incidents of the march, produced a kind of that Scotland knows no more.

The "parks" by Larbert where the Tryst was held presented on the fateful day the aspect of a fair, with the tents and the crowd of country people.

Sheep bleated and cows lowed, and, as it generally was raining, a smell of tar and wool hung in the air. Knots of men wrapped in plaids, their clothes showing the signs of having camped by the roadside, their faces tanned or reddened by the sun, their beards as shaggy as the coats of the rough kyloes that they passed their lives with, chatted with Lowland shepherds from the Cheviots.

Dealers from England, better dressed but slower in their minds and speech than any Scotsman possibly can be, surveyed the animals, poking them with their sticks, and running down their points after the fashion of the intending buyer in every country of the world. Rough-looking lads, but with that air of supernatural cunning that commerce with the horse imparts, ran ponies up and down.

Beefy-faced cattle-dealers from the Midlands roared at Highlanders whose English was defective, thinking to make them understand by noise; and Highlanders, who themselves understood English almost as well as they did,

and spoke it far more purely, pretended to mistake their meaning to get more time to think what they should say.

When, after an infinity of haggling, a price was reached, to which the seller gave assent, both parties would adjourn to one or other of the tents, to wet the bargain, and sit down at a white, deal table, placed upon the grass, and swallow whisky in a way that no one not connected with the cattle trade could possibly achieve. On them it had no more effect than milk, unless to make the fiery faces of the Yorkshire dealers a thought redder, and set the Highlanders a-talking still more fluently than when they had gone in.

Quarrels were rare, and drunkenness not common with such seasoned vessels; but on the rare occasions when the whisky had proved stronger than the head, they lay down peacefully to sleep it off, beside their animals, with their heads buried in their plaids.

The day wore on, amidst the lowing of the beasts and noise of bargaining, and towards evening the roads were full of strings of animals being driven off, either towards the railway, or on the way to their new homes. I often wondered if they missed the rough and

shaggy men, so near to them in type, or thought about the upland pastures in the glens, or the sweet, waving grass of island "machars" in the lush Lowland fields.

It pleases us and stills our conscience to say that animals know no such feeling, but yet "I hae my doots," and the wild winnyings and jerks back on the halter must mean something, . . . but after all they have no souls.

Not that such speculations ever entered anybody's head at Falkirk Tryst. Well, well, the Tryst, that is as I knew it in my boyhood, has slipped away into the realms of old, forgotten, far-away memories.

It formed a link between the modern world and times when kilted drovers with their targets at their backs, girt with their claymores, their feet shod in the hairy brogues by which they gained the name of the Rough-Footed Scots, drove down their kyloes and their ponies through the very bealach that I remember in my youth. They are all gone with the old world they lived in; but still the shadows fall upon the southern slopes and creep into the corries of the Ochils that overlook the historic parks by Larbert in which the Tryst was held. Heavy-nailed boots now press the grass that

once was brushed so lightly by the Highland brogues. No one now sleeps beside the roads, nor, rising with the dawn, wrings out the dew-drops from his plaid.

The life that once was real, now seems fantastic; not half so real as the shadows on the hills, and even they only endure whilst the sun shines, chasing one another up and down till it peeps in again.

LOOSE AND BROKEN MEN

I FOUND the other day an old bundle of papers docketed as above in my own hand.

Many years ago I must have come on them at Gartmore, and as in those days it was what the people called a "sort o' back-lying place," traditions of the doings of loose and broken men still survived, though vaguely and as in a mist. The loose and broken men, whose fame still echoed faintly in my youth, were those who after the "Forty-five" either were not included in the general amnesty, or had become accustomed to a life of violence.

Once walking down the avenue at Gartmore with my old uncle Captain Speirs, we passed three moss-grown lumps of pudding-stone that marked the ancient gallows-tree. Turning to it he said:

"Many's the broken man your ancestor, old Laird Nicol, hangit up there, after the 'Forty-five.'" He also told me, just as if he had been speaking about savages, "When I was young,

one day up on Loch Ard-side, I met a Hielandman, and when I spoke to him, he answered "'Cha neil Sassenach'; I felt inclined to lay my whip about his back."

Even then I wondered why, but prudently refrained from saying anything, for the old Captain had served through the Peninsular Campaign, had been at Waterloo, and, as the country people used to say, he had "an eye intil him like a hawk."

This antipathy to Highlandmen which I have seen exhibited in my youth, even by educated men who lived near to the Highland Line, was the result of the exploits of the aforesaid loose and broken men, who had descended (unapostolically) from the old marauding clans.

The enemy came from "above the pass" to such as my old uncle, and all the glamour Scott had thrown upon the clans never removed the prejudice from their dour Lowland minds.

Perhaps if we had lived in those times we might have shared it too.

One of the documents in the bundle to which I have referred is docketed "Information for Mr. Thomas Buchanan, Minister of Tullyallan, heritor of Gouston in Cashlie." Gouston is a

farm on the Gartmore estate, on which I, in years gone by, have passed many long and wet hours measuring drains and listening to complaints: "Laird, ma barn flure's fair boss," "Ye ken a' the grips are wasted," "I havena got a gate in the whole farm," with much of the same kind; complaints no doubt all justified, but difficult to satisfy without Golconda or the Rand to draw upon, are ever present in my mind.

The document itself, one of a bundle dealing with the case, written I should judge by a country writer (I have several documents drawn up by one who styles himself "Writer in Garrachel," a farm in Gartmore barony), is on that thick and woolly but well-made paper used by our ancestors, and unprocurable to-day. The writing is elegant, with something of a look of Arabic about its curving lines. It states that:

"Ewan Cameron, Donald M'Tavish in Glenco, Allen Mackay in thair ["in thair" seems what the French would call "une terre vague," but has a fine noncommittal flavour in a legal document], John and Arch. M'Ian, his brethren, Donald M'Ian *alias* Donachar, also Paul Clerich, Dugald and Duncan M'Ferson

in Craiguchty, Robert Dou M'Gregor and his brethren, John and Water M'Watt, *alias* Forrester, in Ofference of Garrochyle belonging to the Laird of Gartmore . . . came violentlie under cloud of night to the dwelling-house of Isabell M'Cluckey, relict of John Carrick, tenant in the town of Gouston with this party above mentioned and more, on December sixteen hundred [the date is blank, but it occurred in 1698], and then on the same night, it being the Lord's Day, broke open her house, stript [another document on the case says "struck," which seems more consonant to the character of the Highlanders] and bound herself and children contrarie to the authoritie of the nation, and took with them her whole insicht and plenishing,*

* *The subjoined Inventory, dated* 1698, *shows how thoroughly the work was done. It also shows what a careful housewife Isabell M'Luckie was, and that she was a past mistress of the science of making a "poor mouth."*

Ane particular List of what goods and geir utencills and domicills was taken and plundered from Issobell M'Luckie Relict of the decest John Kerick by Eun Cameron and his Accomplices as it was given up by her self:

In primis there was Ane gray meir estat to	040	00	0
Item other three meirs estat to 20 lib p.p. is	060	00	0
It Ane flecked horse and ane black horse estat to 24 lib p.p	048	00	0
It there was taken away ten tydie Coues estat to p.p. 24 lib is	240	00	0

utensils and domicil, with the number of six horses and mares, sixteen great cows, and their followers, item thirty-six great sheep and lambs and hogs equivalent, and carried them all away violentlie, till they came to the said Craiguchty, where the said Ewan Cameron cohabited."

I fancy that in Craiguchty, which even in

It	three forrow Cowes giving milk estat to 20 lib pp is	060	00	0
It	two yeild Cowes estat to 12 lib p.p. is	024	00	0
It	two twoyeirolds estat to 8 lib p.p. is	016	00	0
It	there was taken away thirtietwo great south-land Sheep estat to thre pound Scots p pice is	096	00	0
It	there was fourtein hogs estat to 2 lib 10 sh: p.p is	021	00	0
It	of Cloath and wolen yairn estat to	035	00	0
It	Eight plyds viz four qrof double and four single estat to	048	00	0
It	ane pair of wollen Clats estat to	001	16	0
It	Ane pair of Cards estat to 2 mk is	001	6	8
It	two heckles viz Ane fyne & ane courser estat to	003	18	0
It	of mead neŭ harn in shirts 30 elns estat to	012	00	0
It	of neŭ Linning in Shirts 24 elns estat to	012	00	0
It	ten petticoats estat to	030	00	0
It	four westcoats for women estat to	004	6	0
It	thre gouns for women estat to	012	0	0
It	on ax two womels a borrall & a hamer estat to	002	10	0
It	two brass pans estat	003	12	0
It	two dozen & a half of spoons estat to	001	18	0
It	on pair of sheetts & and on pair of blanqwets estat to	005	00	0
It	on Covering estat to	004	00	0
It	two bibles estat to	003	10	0
It	on pair of tongs estat to	000	10	0
It	2 pair shoes & 2 pairs stockings estat to	005	08	0

my youth was a wild-looking place, the "authoritie of the nation" had little sway in those days. From another document in the bundle, it appears that not content with driving off the stock and bearing away the "insicht and the plenishing," the complainants and their servants "were almost frichted from their Witts, through

It	two green aprons estat to	003	00	0
It	Ane pair of plou Irons and plough graith estat to	012	00	0
It	Ane pistoll and a firelock estat to	010	00	0
It	of readie Cash	013	06	8
It	ane buff belt	001	04	0
It	two plyds estat to	016	00	0
It	of Muslin and Lining and oyr fyn Close estat to	020	00	0
It	ten elns of new black felt in yearn & wool	010	00	0
It	Sick Sack of tueling four elns each	008	00	0
It	a canvas eight eln	002	13	04
It	a quarter of Butter & a half ston	002	00	0

I flacked horse 4 year old
I bell broun horse 3 whyt feet 8 year old
2 bell broun mares whyt foted whyt nosed 7 year old
Merk of her sheep
prope in ye far lug & only cloven in ye near lug—

Loss	of 20 bols of red land whyt corn sowing	33	13	04
It	a hundred cups of sheep muck	09	00	00
It	Sixtie cups of cows muck	02	00	00
It	of silver rent	60	00	00
It	of Lorne meal ten bols	80	00	00
It	of expenses wt. M'Luckie at sevrel trysts	10	00	00
It	of spy money	10	00	00
		204	13	4

the barbarous usadge of the said broken and loose men."

However, the "mad-herdsmen," as the phrase went then, drove the "creagh" towards Aberfoyle. The path by which they carried it was probably one that I once knew well.

It runs from Gartmore village, behind the Drum, out over a wild valley set with junipers and whins, till after crossing a little tinkling, brown burn, it enters a thick copse. Emerging from it, it leaves two cottages on the right hand, near which grow several rowans and an old holly, and once again comes out upon a valley, but flatter than the last. In the middle of it runs a larger burn, its waters dark and mossy, with little linns in which occasionally a pike lies basking in the sun.

An old-world bridge is supported upon blocks of pudding-stone, the footway formed of slabs of whin, which from remotest ages must have been used by countless generations of brogue-shod feet, it is so polished and worn smooth. Again, there is another little copse, surrounded by a dry-stone dyke, with hoops of withies stuck into the feals, to keep back sheep, and then the track comes out upon the manse

of Aberfoyle, with its long row of storm-swept Spanish chestnuts, planted by Dr. Patrick Graham, author of *Sketches of Perthshire.* From this spot, Ewan Cameron, Donald M'Ian (*alias* Donachar) and Robert Dhu M'Gregor might have seen, though of course they did not look, being occupied with the creagh, the church and ancient churchyard of Aberfoyle, and the high-pitched, two-arched bridge, under which runs the Avon-Dhu.

All this they might have seen as "Ewan Cameron cohabited at Craiguchty," near the Bridge of Aberfoyle. Had they but looked they would have seen the clachan with its low, black huts looking like boats set upside down, the smoke ascending from the wooden box-like chimneys—these they did not mark, quite naturally, as they were the only chimneys they had ever seen; nor did the acrid peat-reek fill their nostrils, accustomed to its fumes, with the same smell of wildness as it does ours to-day.

Craigmore and its White Lady was but a ruckle of old stones to them, and if they thought of any natural feature, it may have been the Fairy Hill to which the Rev. Robert Kirke, their minister, had retired only six years

before, to take up habitation with the Men of Peace.*

Most probably they only scrugged their bonnets, shifted their targets on their backs, called out to any lagging beast, or without stopping picked up a stone to throw at him. The retiring freebooters "lay there (Craig-uchty) the first night." One can see them, going and coming about the little shieling, and Ewan Cameron's wife and children, with shaggy hair and uncouth look, coming out to meet them, just as the women of an Arab *duar* come out to meet a marauding party, raising their shrill cries.

Some of the men must have been on guard all night to keep the animals from straying and to guard against surprise, and as they walked about, blowing upon their fingers to keep them warm, the cold December night must have seemed long to them.

They would sleep little, between the cold and fear of an attack. Long before daylight they would be astir, just as a war party of Indians, or cattle-men upon an expedition in

* See the *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fairies and Fauns*, written in 1691 (?) and supposed to have been first published in 1815. It was reprinted in 1893, with Introduction by Andrew Lang.

America, who spend the colder hours before the morning seated around the fire, and always rise just before dawn to boil their coffee pots. We know what took the place of coffee with Ewan Cameron and his band, or can divine it at the least.

Next night they reached Achray, "in the Earl of Menteith's land, and lay there in the town." By this time the "said hership" (that is, the stolen beasts) must have been rather troublesome to drive, as the old trail, now long disused, that ran by the birch copse above the west end of Loch Dunkie, was steep and rocky, and ill adapted for "greate cowes."

Both at Craiguchty and Achray they had begun to sell their booty, for the tenants there are reported as not having been "free of the hership."

In fact, "Walter and John M'Lachlin in Blairwosh" bought several of the animals. Their names seem not to have been concealed, and it appears the transaction was looked upon as one quite natural.

One, Donald Stewart, "who dwells at the west end of Loch Achray," also "bought some of the geare," with "certaine" of the sheep,

and "thereafter transported them to the highland to the grass."

Almost unconsciously, with regard to these sheep, the Spanish proverb rises to the mind, that says, "A sardine that the cat has taken, seldom or never comes back to the plate."

So far, all is clear and above-board. Ewan Cameron and his band of rogues broke in and stole and disposed of such of the booty as they could, sharing, one hopes, equitably between them the sum of "fiftie six pounds, six shillings and eight pennies" (Scots) that they found in the house, reserving naturally a small sum, in the nature of a bonus, to Ewan Cameron, for his skill in getting up the raid.

As I do not believe in the word "stripping," and am aware that if we substitute the homelier "striking" for it, no great harm would probably be done in an age when the stage directions in a play frequently run "beats his servant John," when speaking of some fine, young spark, all hitherto seems to have been conducted in the best style of such business known on the Highland line.

Now comes in one "Alexander Campbell, *alias* M'Grigor," who "informs"; oh, what a falling off was there, in one of the Gregarach.

This hereditary enemy of my own family, and it is chiefly upon that account I wish to speak dispassionately . . . *sed magis amicus veritas* . . . informed, that is he condescended to give his moral support to laws made by the Sassenach, "that Duncan Stewart in Baad of Bochasteal, bought two of the said cowes." Whatever could have come into his head? Could not this Campbell, for I feel he could not have been of the sept of Dougal Ciar Mor, the hero who wrought such execution on the shaveling band* of clerks after Glen Fruin, have left the matter to the "coir na claidheamh"?

So far from this, the recreant M'Gregor, bound and obliged himself "to prove the same by four sufficient witnesses"—so quickly had he deteriorated from the true practice of his clan. His sufficient witnesses were "John Grame and his sub-tenant in Ballanton, his neighbour Finley Dymoch, and John M'Adam, Osteleir in Offerance of Gartmore." A little

* I am well aware that gentlemen of Clan Gregor have indignantly denied that Dougal Ciar Mor was the author of the slaughter of the students in Glen Fruin. If though we hold him innocent, how is he to be justified in the eyes of fame, for he seems to have done nothing else worthy of remark, . . . except of course being the ancestor of Rob Roy, an entirely unconscious feat of arms on his part.

leaven leaveneth the whole, and the bad example of this man soon bore its evil fruit.

We find that "Robert Grame in Ballanton" (that is not wonderful, for he was of a hostile clan and had received none of the spoil as justifiable hush money) also came forward, with what in his case I should soften into "testimony." Far more remains to tell. "Jean, spouse to the said Ewan Cameron," that very Ewan who so justly received a bonus as the rent of his ability, also came forward and informed. She deponed "that Walter M'Watt was of the band," although we knew it all before.

It is painful to me to record that the said M'Watt was "tenant to said Laird of Gartmore," for it appears, according to the evidence of Ewan Cameron's wife, that "he brocht the said rogues to the said house, went in at ane hole in the byre, which formerly he knew, opened the door and cutted the bands of the said cowes and horse." This man, who after all neither made nor unmade kings, but only served his lord (Ewan Cameron), "got for his pains, two sheep, a plyde, a pair of tow-cards, two heckles and a pair of wool cleets, with ane maikle brass pan and several other thinges." The harrying of the

luckless Isabell M'Cluckey seems to have been done thoroughly enough, and in a business-like way. However, punishment possibly overtook the evil-doers, as Thomas M'Callum, "who changed the said brass pott with the said M'Watt for bute,"* testified in confirmation of the above.

"Item Janet Macneall giveth up that she saw him take the plough irons out of a moss hole the summer thereafter with ane pott when he flitted out of Offerance to the waird, and that he sent the plaid and some other plenishing that he got to John Hunter his house in Corriegreenan for fear of being known. Item the said Walter M'Watt died tenant to the Laird of Gartmore, and his spouse and the said John Hunter took and intromitted with the whole geir. Item Elizabeth Parland spouse to umquhile George M'Muir, Moorherd in Gartmore, informs, she being ane ostlere, that they gave a cow that night they lifted the hership to Patrick Graeme in Middle Gartfarran in the byegoing betwixt him and his brother Alexander Graeme in Borland and also that the said Robert M'Grigor and his brethern with the said John M'Watt met them in the way, although they came not to the house.

* Bute=spoil or exchange.

"Item that they sold the rest of the geir at one Nicol M'Nicol's house in the Brae of Glenurchy and the said Nicol M'Nicol got a flecked horse for meat and drink from them and lastly Dugald M'Laren and his brother Alexander got aquaviti among them. This is the true information of the said persons that I have endeavoured to get nottrie att, and if they be not material bonds and grounds of pursuit in it I give it over, but as I think the most material point is in the third article."

So ends the document, leaving us in the dark as to what happened in the end, just as is usually the case in life.

The names of nearly all the witnesses, as Elizabeth Parlane, John Ffisher, Robert Carrick, Robert M'Laren, Thomas M'Millan, the pseudo-M'Gregor, and of course the Grames, were all familiar to me in the Gartmore of my youth.

All the place-names remain unchanged, although a certain number of them have been forgotten, except by me, and various old semi-Highlanders interested in such things, or accustomed to their sound. Ballanton, Craiguchty, Cullochgairtane (now Cooligarten), Offerance of Garrachel, Gouston of Cashlie, Bochaistail, Gartfarran, Craigieneult, Boquhapple, Corrie-

greenan, and others which I have not set down, as Milltown of Aberfoyle, though they occur in one or other of the documents, are household words to me.

What is changed entirely is the life. No one, no one alive can reconstruct a Highlander of the class treated of in my document as Loose and Broken Men.

Pictures may show us chiefs; song and tradition tell us tricks of manner; but Ewan Cameron, Robert Dou M'Grigor, and their bold compeers elude us utterly. A print of Rob Roy, from the well-known picture once in the possession of the Buchanans of Arden, hangs above the mantelpiece just where I write these lines. He must have known many a "gallowglass" of the Ewan Cameron breed; but even he was semi-civilized, and of a race different from all my friends. Long-haired, light (and rough) footed, wild-eyed, ragged carles they must have been; keen on a trail as is an Indian or a Black-boy in North Queensland; pitiless, blood-thirsty, and yet apt at a bargain, as their disposal of the "particular goodes, to wit, four horses and two mares," the sheep and other "gear," goes far to prove.

The mares and horses are set down as being

worth "thirttie six pound the piece overhead," and I am certain Ewan Cameron got full value for them, even although the price was paid in Scots, for sterling money in those days could not have been much used "above the pass." It must have been a more exciting life in Gartmore and in Aberfoyle than in our times, and have resembled that of Western Texas fifty years ago. In London, Addison was rising into fame, and had already translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Prior was Secretary to the Embassy in Holland, Swift was a parish priest at Laracor, and in the very year (1698) in which Ewan Cameron drove his "creagh" past the Grey Mare's Tail, on the old road to Loch Achray, Defoe published his *Essay on Projects*, and two years later his *True Englishman*.

Roads must have been non-existent, or at least primitive in the district of Menteith. This is shown clearly by the separation, as of a whole world, between the farm of Gouston, near Buchlyvie, and the shores of Loch Achray, where it was safe to sell, in open day, beasts stolen barely fifteen miles away.

Men, customs, crops, and in a measure even the face of the low country through which those loose and broken men passed, driving the

stolen cows and sheep, have changed. If they returned, all that they would find unaltered would be the hills, Ben Dearg and Ben Dhu, Craig Vadh, Ben Ledi, Schiehallion, Ben Voirlich, distant Ben More, with its two peaks, and Ben Venue peeping up timidly above the road they travelled on that December night; the Rock of Stirling, the brown and billowy Flanders moss, and the white shrouding mists.

AT SANCHIDRIAN

It was full harvest-time throughout Castile. The corn, short in the stalk and light, as is all corn that ripens early, stood ready to be reaped. In places it had been already cut, and lay in sheaves upon the ground. In others it was cut and carried, and again, between some patches, carts loaded high were creaking through the fields, if the word field can be applied to ground that has no hedges or divisions visible to any other eyes than those accustomed from their birth to the brown plains. Across the dusty, calcined steppe the Sud-Express had crawled since daybreak, stopping at every wayside station, jolting and creaking like a bullock wagon. The passengers had long ceased to look out, and sat perspiring in their darkened berths, for the Castilian plain in summer is not for eyes accustomed to see beauty only in places where even nature puts on a sort of easy, meretricious dress, and decked in pine woods, set with hills and waterfalls,

seems to invite the applause of travelling photographers. Castile only reveals itself to those who know it under every aspect, wind-swept and drear in winter, sun-baked in summer, and at all times adust and stern, a mere wide steppe bounded by distant clearly cut hills, from which nothing is to be expected but strange effects of light.

On every side, right up to where it joined the distant hills, stretched the brown plain. The sun had scorched the very trunks of the trees till they appeared to suffer and to be about to burst, just as they crack and suffer in a frost. The only flowers left alive were a few yellow thistles and some clumps of artemisia, which reared their heads, as it were, in defiance of the sun. Long lines of men mounted on donkeys crossed between the fields of stubble and of corn. The Castilian summer had turned them black as Arabs, and their sad, high-pitched songs, as they kept on their way indomitably in the fiery heat, seemed to complete the likeness to the men from whom they had inherited all that they knew of agriculture.

Over the steppe, the narrow line of railway formed the connecting link with the outside world, the world of newspapers, of motor-cars,

of aviation, and of telephones. Glistening bright in the sun, like a steel ribbon, ran the line. It passed by little tile-roofed towns, each clustering round its church, brown and remote —towns where a sandy, unpaved street ran out until it lost itself in the great plain; towns only joined to one another by a narrow track meandering through the corn fields, or the sparse round-topped pine woods, tracks that avoided all the obstacles, passing round, stony hills and following watercourses till they came on a shallow place to cross. Often the towns were only visible like ships hull down, the church towers seemingly hung in the air without foundations, they were so far off from the line. The train jogged on, passing by Ataquines, Palacios de Goda, Arévalo, Adanero and other little stations, where no one possibly could have got in or out since first the line was laid. It entered them and stopped under some dust-laden acacias or China-trees. A man emerged and called the station's name, adding "a minute" or "two minutes" as the case might be, although the train was just as likely to stop ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, whilst the electric bell twittered so faintly that at times one was not sure if it

was really an electric bell that sounded or only crickets in the sand chirping metallically. Sometimes a horse stood blinking in the sun tied to a post, a gun upon the heavy old-world saddle and a brown blanket hanging from the pommel, almost to the ground; sometimes some charcoal-burners' mules stood waiting to be unloaded, and generally some ragged-looking fowls, half buried in the sand, were squatted at the lee-side of the round, mud-topped oven, striving to dodge the heat. Occasionally a half-dressed woman peeped from a window, her blue-black hair wild as a pony's mane, holding the blind between her teeth as she looked out upon the train. Such were the stations, mere islands in a sea of brown; each one the faithful copy of the other, and every one of them cheaply constructed and sun-bleached till they had all become as much a part and parcel of the landscape as the mud houses with their red-tiled eaves.

So from one little, ill-built point of contact with the world, to the next, as ill-built as the last, the train crept on, the heat increasing and the subtile air becoming more diaphanous, so that the distant mountains almost appeared to be transparent, and the dead haulms of fennel

and of mullein to stand out so clearly that they looked like trees.

Herds of black cattle stood by dried-up water-holes, occasionally a bullock licked the earth where it appeared almost like china, polished and glazed as it had dried and baked, and then stamping and bellowing, slowly walked back into the herd. Brown shepherds stood immovable as posts, their shadows forming a refuge for their dogs, their flocks all huddled in a ring, with their heads crouched low upon the ground, to escape their enemy, the sun. Nature stood silent in the violet haze, and as the train rattled across the ill-closed catch-points outside another little station, a porter called out in a long-drawn melody, "Sanchidrian, five minutes," and the express came alongside the platform, the engine throbbing as if it were something living and glad to be at rest. A goods train standing just outside the station bore the inscription, written with a piece of chalk, "No water in Velayos," and the whole plain looked parched and suffering as if the rain of fire that fell from heaven upon it had burned into its heart. No passengers stood waiting, even the little groups of country people that generally throng Spanish stations, making the platform

a public promenade, were missing, for Sanchidrian itself was distant from the line.

The weary stationmaster in his gold-laced cap and uniform frock-coat was, with the porter who had called the station's name, the only living thing except two nearly naked children, sitting by the draw-well, and a lean yellow dog. The five minutes that the train ought to have remained might just as well have been abridged to one, or, on the other hand, drawn out to twenty, and no one would have cared, had not, emerging from a cloud of dust, a rider come up to the hitching-post, dismounted hurriedly, and holding in his hand his saddle-bags, walked quickly to the open door, at which the cooks and waiters of the dining-car stood trying to catch a little air. "Friends," he said, taking off his hat and passing his brown hand across his forehead, "have you any ice?" They stared at him as he stood in his short black jacket edged with imitation astrakhan, his tight, grey trousers strapped inside the leg with the same cloth from which they had been made, his black serge sash showing beneath his waistcoat with its silver buckles, and his red-worsted saddle-bags, tasselled and fringed, thrown over his right shoulder and hanging down his back.

"Ice, why of course we have it," said the waiter. "Who in this heat could live without it shut in the hot train?" answered the conductor, interested and glad to have the opportunity of a chance word with anyone outside his little world.

The horseman, who looked anxiously at the somnolent train out of the corner of his eye as if it were a colt that might spring forward at any minute and leave him in the lurch, began again: "You could not live without ice here in this train, you say, eh? My father cannot die without it. For days the fever has consumed him, and in the night, listening to every hour the watchman calls, he says 'Miguel,' that is my name—Miguel Martinez, at your service —'I could die easier if I had some ice . . . a little ice to put upon my forehead and between my lips.' Ice in Sanchidrian! As well go out to gather artichokes at sea. To-day he seemed just going, and the priest said to me, 'Miguel, saddle the Jerezano and go down and meet the train; there they have ice, for certainly those who travel by it must drink cool.' So I have come; say, can you spare me a lump of ice, for what I spoke about?"

The electric bell stopped twittering, and the

porter called "Passengers aboard," but still the train stood at the platform, although the engine-driver had clambered slowly to his post. He whistled, and the couplings tightened with a jerk, just as a waiter holding a lump of ice about as big as a large loaf came to the door, wrapping it, as he walked, in straw. He gave it to the horseman, who stood waiting in the sun. "A thousand thanks," he said. "A son thanks you in his father's name. What is the value of this piece of ice?" The man who gave it, and the little knot of cooks and waiters standing at the open door of the long dining-car as the train began to move, looked at each other, and one said, "Friend, we do not sell our ice, it is not ours to sell. Moreover, may it relieve your father." Miguel, now walking swiftly by the moving train, said, "Once again, a thousand thanks; take, then, this packet of cigars," and handed to the last man he could reach one of those bundles of ill-rolled salitrose-looking parcels of cigars sold in the *estancos* of small Spanish towns.

The train swung on and rumbled past him, leaving him standing for a moment in the heat, waving his hand to the white-clad cooks and waiters grouped on the platform of the dining-

car. Miguel stood waiting till it had cleared the station, and then, walking outside to where his horse stood waiting, unhitched him and threw the saddle-bags across the saddle, then gathering his reins in his left hand he mounted in one motion, and settling himself, drew out an olive switch which he had left sticking between the pommel and his horse's back; then having felt the lump of ice with his right hand, touched his horse with the spur and set his face towards his home. Putting the butt-end of his cigarette behind his ear, Miguel struck out into the road. The thick, white dust lay on the narrow track like snow, dulling the horse's footfalls and giving him the look of shuffling in his gait, although Miguel, holding his reins high and a little to the near side of the high pommel, and with his spurs dangling behind the cinch, kept him up to the full stretch of the Castilian pace.

His olive face, under his broad-brimmed, grey, felt hat with its straight brim, looked anxiously ahead, and when his little, nervous horse had got well warmed and the dried sweat melted again upon the skin, Miguel, pressing him with his legs, put him to a slow gallop, now and again putting his hand behind the

saddle to feel how the precious lump of ice was standing the fierce sun.

A constant dripping through the worsted saddle-bags warned him to hurry, so he pressed on, passing long lines of mules laden with charcoal or with great nets of straw, and men on donkeys, who looked at him with wonder as he flew past them at three-quarter speed upon the road. Some of them merely said "Adios," and others shouted inquiries as to his haste, but he in every case answered with a wave of his hand and pressed his spurs into the cinch. He passed through groves of olive trees, silvery, gnarled and secular, under whose scanty shade men sat, eating their mid-day meal, their broad-brimmed hats lying beside them on the ground, their close-shaved heads wrapped in old-fashioned, blue-checked handkerchiefs, tied in a knot behind.

As he passed in a cloud of dust, pointing to their olives and their bread and to their leathern skins of wines, they made the gesture of inviting him to eat, and he returned their courtesy by a movement of his hand, taking a pull upon his horse as the track grew steeper and stonier, as it ran through an aromatic waste of cistus and wild thyme. His heavy Arab stirrups

brushed through the sticky cistus which grew on each side of the narrow, sandy path, till they became all coated with their gum and everything stuck to them as if they had been smeared with birdlime.

Butterflies hovered over the great, white flowers, and lizards ran up tree-trunks, pausing and looking round just before they disappeared from view. From the recesses of the waste came an incessant hum of insects, and now and then a flight of locusts shot across the path, and plunged into the bushes, just as a school of flying fish sinks into a wave.

The hot half-hour between the bushes, struggling through the sand, had told its tale upon the gallant, little horse, whose heaving flanks, distended nostrils and protruding eyes showed that he had almost had enough. When they emerged again into the plain and saw the little brown-roofed town, only a short league away, Miguel dismounted for a moment, and after slackening his cinch anxiously secured his saddle-bags, from which large drops of moisture fell upon the ground. Tightening his girth again, he mounted, and the Jerezano, who had stood head to wind, responding to the spur, struck into a short gallop, his

rider holding him together and pressing him with both legs into his bit.

They passed a threshing-floor, on which a troop of mares was being driven round to thresh the corn, followed by a man seated upon a hurdle laid on a heavy stone. The floor itself was white and shiny, and seemed as hard as marble, trodden by the horses' feet. Near it some sun-burned men threw grain into the air with wooden spades to winnow it, and as Miguel passed by upon the road they called out to him, giving him the time of day and asking how his father was; but to them all he only waved his hand and pressed his spurs into his horse's sides, which now were red with blood.

Outside the town the track passed through the bed of a dry stream, and came out on the other bank on a paved causeway set with pebble-stones that led into the town. A heavy stumble on the stones showed him his horse was failing, and he pulled him back into a trot. Passing the straggling cottages, each with its corral for goats, he came into the little street, and as he rode by the church door he touched his hat and crossed himself as his horse slithered on the stones. Turning out of an

angle of the dusty *plaza* with its stucco seats and dwarfed acacias, he came into a street in which the houses seemed of a richer sort of folk, his horse now beaten to a walk. As he neared one which had a roughly sculptured coat of arms over the doorway a sound of wailing fell upon his ears. He stopped, and getting off his horse, he threw the reins mechanically on the ground. A priest came out to meet him. "Miguel," he said, "your father, may God have pardoned him, has left this vale of tears more than an hour ago. The Lord in his great mercy, for the fever burned like fire in his veins, was pleased to make his parting easy, and for an hour before he died he murmured now and then, 'How cool the ice is! It stills the throbbing of my forehead and slakes my thirst—my son Miguel rode for it to the train.'"

Miguel turned to his horse, and taking from the saddle-bags the lump of ice, now little bigger than an apple, followed the priest into the great bare room, where on his bed his father's body lay. Round it stood weeping women, and the children in a corner of the room holding each other's hands gazed

stolidly at the brown face that looked like walnut-wood against the linen of the bed.

Falling upon his knees, Miguel kissed the thin hands crossed on the chest, and then after a prayer he rose and put the precious lump of ice first on his father's forehead and then upon his lips. He crossed himself, and after having said some words of consolation to the women, went out again to where in the hot sandy street his horse stood waiting, with his legs stretched a little forward and his head hanging to the ground. The sweat had made a little pattern in the sand as it dropped from his belly and his flanks. Miguel slowly undid the girths, and taking off the bridle, led the horse into the stable, and after throwing hay upon the manger, went back into the room.

The priest was praying, and the sobbing of the women sounded like surf upon a beach, whilst from outside the crickets' chirping filled the air with its wild melody. Far to the south the Sud-Express still crept along its narrow ribbon of bright rails towards Madrid.

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